

Zuziwe Khuzwayo

0506094F

University of the Witwatersrand

**Bisexuality in Democratic South Africa:
Experiences of Women in Johannesburg**

Supervisor: Professor Srila Roy

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Sociology).

September 2024

Table of contents

Declaration Page	6
Turn It In Scoresheet.....	7
Acknowledgements.....	8
Chapter 1: Introduction	12
1.1 Origins of the research	12
1.2 Sexuality studies in Africa	15
1.3 History of the LGBTQI+ movement and the current context in South Africa	18
1.4 Research question and outline of the thesis	25
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	29
2.1 Introduction.....	29
2.2 The construction of sex and gender	31
2.3 Understanding sexuality.....	34
2.4 Lesbianism	38
2.5 Queerness in Africa.....	46
2.6 Bisexuality	51
2.7 Race, class and geographical spaces in relation to African sexualities	58
2.8 Conclusion	63
Chapter 3: Methodology	64
3.1 Introduction.....	64

3.2	Life histories	67
3.3	Interviews.....	69
3.4	Participant observation.....	74
3.5	Sampling	76
3.6	Ethics and safety	82
3.7	Challenges.....	85
3.8	Conclusion	88
Chapter 4: Discovering a Bisexual Identity		89
4.1	Introduction.....	89
4.2	Early recognition of a queer identity	90
4.3	Queer identity as ‘un-African’ and bisexuality stigma management.....	101
4.4	Tension between bisexual and lesbian women	107
4.5	Disclosure to partners and others	115
4.6	Conclusion	120
Chapter Five: ‘Coming Out’ and Multiple Understandings of Bisexuality by Participants		122
5.1	Introduction.....	122
5.2	The importance of coming out.	123
5.2.1	Authenticity and agency	125
5.2.2	Coming out as political resistance.	128
5.2.3	Validity of bisexuality.....	132

5.3	Challenges of coming out	134
5.3.1	Fear of rejection	134
5.3.2	Misunderstood sexuality	138
5.3.3	Fear of violence.....	140
5.4	Rejection of heteronormativity.	142
5.5	Inviting in.....	146
5.6	Conclusion	148
Chapter 6: Spaces of Safety and Violence in Johannesburg		150
6.1	Introduction.....	150
6.2	Safe spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals.....	151
6.3	Class differentiation in queer-friendly public spaces in Johannesburg	155
6.4	Regulation of women’s bodies in public and safe spaces.....	162
6.5	Creating spaces for queer women.	168
6.6	Safe spaces online	177
6.7	Conclusion	182
Chapter 7: Biphobia, Stigma, and Sexual Violence and Harassment of Bisexuals		185
7.1	Introduction.....	185
7.2	Multiple forms of bisexual discrimination.....	186
7.3.	Investment in the binary and heteropatriarchy.....	192
7.4	Physical violence experienced by bisexual women.	206

7.5	Conclusion	211
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....		212
8.1	Introduction.....	212
8.2	Summary and findings	212
8.3	Limitations of the study	215
8.4	Future research.....	216
References		218

Declaration Page

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

School of Social Sciences

SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

Declaration by Student

I Zuziwe Khuzwayo (Student number: 0506094F) am a student registered for PhD in Philosophy in the year 2024. I hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that ALL the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.



Signature:

Date: 30/09/2024

Turn It In Scoresheet

Z. Khuzwayo complete thesis edited - Jan 2024.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9 %	8 %	6 %	%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov Internet Source	2 %
2	www.frontiersin.org Internet Source	1 %
3	link.springer.com Internet Source	<1 %
4	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	<1 %
5	core.ac.uk Internet Source	<1 %
6	dokumen.pub Internet Source	<1 %
7	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
8	open.uct.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
9	www.coursehero.com Internet Source	<1 %

Acknowledgements

The journey of this PhD has been a long one! I began this journey viewing the PhD as a pragmatic exercise and in the process, I found it to be a spiritual, emotional and intellectual exercise. What I came to realize is that this journey is more about your perseverance than about your intellect. That perseverance for me was filled by the insurmountable support of my support structure of family, friends, mentors and fellow PhD students. These groups of people have been with me through the breakdowns, crying and breakthroughs. I could not have done this without them.

For me from the onset I knew that I had to have a village of people who had a PhD and could support me when I felt lost and unable to finish. Thembinkosi Twalo, you have not only been a friend but also a mentor to me through my PhD. Thank you for allowing me to vent and for always telling me to keep chipping away at the PhD slowly. I am forever grateful to you. Shireen Ally, Nicky Falkof and Prishani Naidoo, I want to thank you for being my ‘academic godmothers’ in my journey. I know that we never spoke a lot, but whenever I needed your help or just needed advice you were there for me. I am so thankful to have you in my academic life.

Prof Hlonipha Mokoena – where do I begin? Words cannot explain but I will try. From the moment that I was part of the WISER family, you have been so supportive of me on this journey. I have come to you about anything and everything: from crying to you about being nervous about starting a job while doing a PhD to constantly having my existential crises about possibly being an academic scholar. You have always been willing to listen and have been incredibly supportive of me. I thank you for being my mentor and someone with whom I could share my vulnerabilities as a scholar and beyond. Thank you for your kindness, your time and your

wisdom. I am forever grateful and thankful to have such a strong black woman who was supportive of me. I hope that one day I can pay it forward to other students who do a PhD as you have laid the path on how to do it well. Also thank you for your good style, you are always looking good!!!

To my fellow PhD students, non-PhD students and anyone with whom I bounced off my ideas and thoughts. Thank you for the reading groups, WhatsApp chats and the informal talks that I have had with all of you. There are too many names (also I cannot remember them all) but I am thankful that I had a group of thinkers who were in conversation with me along the way. You all supported me in different ways. I want to especially thank Ragi Bashonga, who was my fellow sister in this journey. Sis, I could not have done this without you, and I thank you for the camaraderie.

To my participants who opened themselves up to me, thank you for your trust and wanting to participate in my study. Some of the stories you shared with me were so personal and I thank you for putting that trust in me to tell your stories properly. Thank you to GALA, OUT LGBT Well-being and Triangle Project for your support in all ways.

Emotionally different people have supported me. Thank you to Tammy Levin, my coach, Phillipa Bramwell-Jones, my dietician/counsellor, and Gerard Finnemore, my therapist. All of you have been incredibly caring towards me during this process. I have been able to come to each of you and share my vulnerabilities as a scholar and as a woman and you have all been helpful in providing space and suggestions about how I can move forward. To my chiropractor Dr Chase McWilliam who helped me physically but also emotionally in this journey Thank you to all of you. Gratitude also goes to all my friends for being supportive and listening to me work

through my thesis over the past six years. I love you all deeply and I thank you all.

It was always challenging for me to work and study, but I was fortunate to have two good managers who supported my studies. Nicolette Naylor, I thank you for giving me the space and supporting me in my studies. You did not have to do that, but you recognized the importance of supporting younger women in their studies and for that I will be forever grateful. Monica Aleman, I thank you for also being supportive and being someone whom I could come to for advice, both personally and professionally. Both of you have shown me how to be a feminist leader in a management position. It has not been easy, and I thank you for allowing me to be me in the workplace and giving me the space to grow with my studies and my work. Thank you to all my former colleagues at the HSRC and the Ford Foundation who were supportive of my studies.

Financially I would like to thank the ‘Governing Intimacies Project’ funded by the Mellon Foundation for providing me with assistance for my studies. Secondly, I would like to thank the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS), in collaboration with the South African Humanities Deans Association (SAHUDA), whose contribution towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NIHSS and SAHUDA. Thank you to all the administrators of these funds who assisted me in getting the finances or any other resources that I needed to complete my studies. Thank you to Karen Press for editing my document. Thank you for your input and for helping me with my grammar and sentence structure!!

Srila, I could not have done this without you. It has been a journey, and I would do it all over again with you. Thank you for the ups and downs and for the growth. You really have challenged

me in the best of ways, and I have grown so much through your supervision. I am forever thankful, and I hope that this thesis is the first of many collaborations of our work together. Thank you for everything.

To my family: Mom, Dad, Ayanda, Thabile, Bonisile. You are my everything. Thank you for holding me during my difficult times and cheering me in my joyful times during this PhD. I could not have done this without you, and I am forever grateful. Thanks also to my extended family who supported me along the way. A special shout out to the 'Baes and Bae-less' for holding your girl down! I could not have done this without you guys. Thank you for helping me escape my PhD when I needed to and reminding me that I am more than my studies.

God, you have just been a solid in my life. The journey has been long, but you have been there with me the whole way. Patience is a challenge for me, but I have gained some of it during this study with you beside me. To my ancestors bakwaGumede nabakwaMthembu, ngiyabonga ukuthi nikhona. Niqhubeke ukungitshenigsa indlela. Thank you for everything.

Lastly, I want to thank myself! Through the crying, denial, frustrations, breakdowns, existential crises, anxiety and joy I am proud of me. I was able to have the perseverance through the challenges and I am proud of the person I am from this ride. I am a better scholar and most importantly a richer human being through this experience.

I dedicate this thesis to two groups of people: bisexuals across the globe and my parents. To bisexuals of different genders and non-genders across the globe, claim space, both private and public, how you want when you want, in all ways. To my parents, I am everything I am because of the two of you.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Origins of the research

The origins of this thesis lie in my own personal journey and discovery of myself as a bisexual woman, and in my observations of and reflections with other bisexual and queer¹ women. I have been aware of my bisexual identity from a young age, but I never felt comfortable to disclose it. My reluctance to do so was influenced by the lack of affirming representations of bisexuality in the media or in my community while I was growing up. This resulted in me suppressing my bisexual feelings and adopting a heterosexual identity. In 2016, I started to be more socially involved in queer spaces in and around the city of Johannesburg. Through going to bars and clubs, such as *Liquid Blue* and other similar venues in Melville, and participating in Activate, an LGBTQI+² club at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University), I started to notice how the discussion and visibility of bisexuals was minimal or non-existent. When there was a discussion on bisexuality in these spaces, some of the responses were mixed, with many individuals questioning the legitimacy of a bisexual identity.

All these experiences led me to author a paper with a former colleague (Khuzwayo & Morison, 2018) on my own experience as a bisexual woman. The paper looked at my early discovery of my sexual identity, at the biphobia I encountered when disclosing my identity, and at the invisibility of this identity, as few bisexuals at the time were openly in community with each

¹ The word queer does not refer to the essence of an individual, in this case sexual identity', rather the word gets its meaning from the relational contexts it is used. The word can be defined as that which is not the norm or legitimate in society. This means that the word is fluid and can encompass different meanings in relation to sexual identity, race or politics as long as it is used in a manner that indicates behaviour, beliefs and identities that are not the usual (Butler, 1993). For this thesis the word 'queer' is used to mean individuals who are not heterosexual. For this thesis the word 'queer' is used to mean individuals who are not heterosexual.

² LGBTQI+ in this thesis stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

other or with other LGBTQI+ individuals. I received some positive feedback on this paper from other bisexual individuals who could relate to my experience of invisibility and biphobia. I then started to research bisexuality in South Africa and noticed that some research on bisexual identity had been done (Stobie, 2004), but that it was limited. After much discussion with other scholars and my supervisor, I decided to write my PhD thesis on this topic. Through my own experiences as described above, I wanted to understand the history of bisexuality and how it is understood in the South African context today, taking into consideration social factors such as race, class, age and space, and how these factors impact on the ways in which bisexuals construct their identity from a Global South³ perspective.

Another motivation for my research is that I found that how bisexuals have been understood was limited and mainly from experiences coming from the United States of America (USA) or in Europe. Research that focused on bisexuals mainly looked at them from a negative mental health perspective which added onto misunderstanding. The research that has been done on bisexuals has not looked at those living in the Global South. There are many reasons for this which I will discuss further in the literature review, but a critical motivation for me was that I wanted to visibilise the experience of bisexuals living in Johannesburg. I wanted to delve deeper into the experiences of how women living in the Global South defined, understood and performed bisexuality in this part of the world. As will be seen in the literature review and in the analysis section of the study, bisexuality has been defined differently over time and in different contexts where in some instances it has been used to refer to the biology of the individual and in other cases it has been used to refer to the sexual identity of the individual. I wanted to acknowledge

³ 'Global South' refers to countries that are located in the Southern hemisphere, and that may have experienced colonialism. These countries are classified as economically developing nations, and some of them do not permit their citizens to have political and democratic freedoms as defined by Western institutions (Márquez & Miguel, 2020).

all of these different definitions and locate the understanding of bisexuality now for my participants and what this can tell us about how bisexuality is understood in a Global South city. Secondly with this research I wanted to contribute to the work done on bisexuals that adds a different dimension by using geographical contexts to inform how it is that we understand bisexuals across the globe in different settings.

Focusing the research on bisexual women was intentional, as my overall work as an academic scholar has focused on researching and writing up women's lives and experiences. Academic work that has centred women and their experiences has only been undertaken since the 1970s, beginning with the creation of a formal Women's Studies Program at San Diego State College; from then on, other programmes have been initiated across the globe (Salper, 2011). The development of this research focus is even more recent on the African continent, where such work is still in its early phase. This is especially true regarding black women: it is only very recently that our multiple experiences have begun to be documented in a manner that properly shows the fullness of our humanity, and not just the harmful and violent experiences we undergo.

In this introduction I first present a broad overview of sexuality studies on the African continent, looking at how studies have shown that homosexuality has always existed in Africa, even though proponents of religious and certain anti-colonial perspectives argue for its immorality and foreignness on the continent. I then provide contextual background on South Africa, and how the understanding of sexuality studies in this country has come into being through a health perspective in the LGBTQI+ movement. These themes will be discussed in detail in the literature review in Chapter 2. Finally, I give a full outline of the structure of the thesis and the significance of this research.

1.2 Sexuality studies in Africa

On the African continent, research by Africans on sexuality was not a priority during the early years of independence (Bennett, 2017). As countries on the continent gained their independence, their focus was on economic development, and academic research focused on trying to assist in this endeavour (Bennett, 2017). As the decades have passed, research on issues of gender and sexuality on the continent has grown. Research has been done in different parts of the continent over the past few decades (Epprecht, 2018; Dankwa, 2009). that has looked at different sexualities in different context which has resulted in resistance and advocacy for LGBTQI+ individuals. An example of this is work done by various authors in a book edited by Bennet and Tamale (2017) titled 'Research on gender and sexualities in Africa' that looks at sexualities across the continent and how they are constructed by individuals in different contexts. Even with this progress, research on sexualities still faces challenges. One of the biggest challenges to sexuality studies in Africa is the lack of recognition of non-heterosexual identities in certain countries (Tamale, 2017); 33 out of the 54 African countries have criminalized homosexual behaviour. This criminalization is influenced by religious conservatism and the idea of homosexuality as 'un-African' (Tamale, 2017). Africa has more Christians than any other continent (599 million), and 44% (446 million) of Africans are Muslim (Johnson et al., 2018; Kettani, 2009). Even though Christian and Muslim individuals have tried to challenge homophobia from within their religious communities, both religions view homosexuality as immoral (Tamale, 2017). The idea of non-heterosexual identities as a product of the colonial West persists in certain parts of the continent (Epprecht, 2013). Some countries have viewed non-heteronormativity as a strategy by the West to retain a form of colonialism (i.e., mental

control) of Africans (Carlse, 2018; Wahab, 2016).⁴ Both the religious and colonial perspectives on homosexuality have made it very difficult for LGBTQI+ individuals to be able to express or even disclose their sexual identity; I will delve more into this in Chapter 5.

Sexuality studies in South Africa is a growing field that has been influenced in numerous ways by other fields of studies. One of the most significant of these fields has been public health, which has looked at the many sexually communicable diseases that affect individuals. An example of this is the HIV/Aids crisis that occurred from the late 1990s. The impact of the HIV/Aids crisis in South Africa cannot be overstated, as this country had the highest prevalence of HIV on the continent during the period 2000–2010 (Shisana et al., 2009). This health crisis impacted on all sectors of South African society and contributed to the more general conversation on LGBTQI+ individuals and sexuality in the country. The focus of this conversation was on heterosexuals, gays and men having sex with men (MSM)⁵, but it did cross over to include lesbian women, and how these women needed to be considered in the discussion as they also had high infection rates (Matebeni et al., 2013). The result of this has been that other sexualities have not been researched with the same amount of interest. This has contributed to the lack of academic knowledge and understanding of these different sexualities in the broader society, as a health lens is the primary perspective used to study LGBTQI+ identities (Nyeck & Epprecht, 2013).

In South Africa the high rates of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) against women in public spaces contributed towards research on sexualities. Women were experiencing sexual harassment as a way to control them and how they expressed themselves in public. An example of this occurred

⁴ The ‘West’ refers to countries in Europe, Australasia and parts of the Americas that have influenced global civilization in terms of knowledge, social norms, values, and social and political systems.

⁵ MSM refers to men having sex with men who don’t identify as homosexuals, as they also have sex with women.

in February 2008 when Nwabisa Ngcukana was stripped and paraded naked amongst onlookers at the Noord taxi rank in the Central Business District (CBD) of Johannesburg because she was wearing a miniskirt. (The Star, 2008). Nwabisa was not the first young women to have this occur to her as others came forth and this sparked outrage and discussion on women's sexuality and how it is regulated in public (Vincent, 2008). Both the health crises as well as the GBV crisis occurring in South Africa at the time framed the context of research on sexualities which was political but limited.

The research has shifted over time and sexuality studies in South Africa have documented the experiences of lesbian and gay individuals, and how they construct their sexual identities in relation to class and race (Mkhize et al., 2010; Reddy et al., 2009). Even from a health perspective, the focus has been on these two factors, with a limited focus on other identities that has limited the discussion. Researchers have recently begun moving away from this focus by looking at other sexualities such as transgender identity, and the types of challenges they face, which of course do intersect with challenges relating to race and class (Camminga, 2018). However, research on the bisexual experience has been very limited (Lynch & Maree, 2013, 2017). Most of the work on bisexuality, as mentioned earlier, is related to MSM and to its impact on HIV infection rates. These studies do not research bisexual individuals themselves, and most of the research that has been associated with bisexuality has centred on men. The research that has been done on bisexual women has looked at these women as them being under the umbrella of LGBTQI+ studies or under work which looks at lesbians (Lynch and Maree, 2013). Research that primarily focuses on bisexual women and their experiences in South Africa has yet to occur. Research looking at women's sexuality has also grown, but it has centred on lesbian identity and on the gender-based violence (GBV) that women experience because of how they express or

perform their sexuality. South Africa has one of the highest rates of GBV in the world, and both straight and lesbian women have endured the most of this violence (Special Reports, 2020). Heteropatriarchal ideas on how women should express their sexuality persist, and if women do not conform to these ideas, they can face forms of violence or harassment. Examples of this can be seen in women being harassed in public because of the way they have chosen to dress (SAPA, 2012). This has made women in South Africa incredibly conscious of how they dress or act in public, as they fear any unwanted negative attention. For queer women, the ability to openly express their sexuality is double layered because of their gender and their sexuality. During the period 2012–2017, 35% of hate crimes in South Africa were perpetrated against lesbian and gay individuals (Shange, 2018). The violence inflicted upon queer and heterosexual women's bodies illustrates the extreme form of heteronormativity that women experience, and the constant pressure on women's bodies to conform to heterosexuality (Gqola, 2015). This threat of violence against women's bodies has affected non-heterosexual women, as they are reluctant to disclose their sexuality because of the possible violence they may experience (Arndt & De Bruin, 2011). As a result, a double-layered form of oppression occurs for non-heterosexual women where their bodies as women are being forced to regulate themselves and their sexuality is also regulated because of the severe threat of violence that might occur.

1.3 History of the LGBTQI+ movement and the current context in South Africa

Research, along with activism and advocacy in different parts of the globe, has contributed to our understanding of non-heterosexual identities. This has occurred mainly through the activities of the LGBTQI+ movement, which has gained political legitimacy via the state in the form of rights and the creation of legal and social spaces (clubs, bars, organizations) for LGBTQI+ individuals

and communities (Flores & Park, 2018). One cannot separate the research related to sexuality studies in South Africa from the LGBTQI+ movement and the HIV/Aids crisis in the country. As mentioned in the previous section, the high HIV+ infection rates that occurred focused research attention on sexual relations between individuals. The health crisis also affected the LGBTQI+ movement, as it was significantly affecting LGBTQI+ individuals, and activists advocated for adequate healthcare to treat the disease (Mbali, 2013).

The LGBTQI+ movement has informed how research on sexuality is conducted. When looking at the movement, it is important to examine the role of settler colonialism and apartheid, and how they influenced understandings of sexualities in South Africa. The Dutch arrived in southern Africa in 1652, bringing with them the idea of Christianity. By 1779 the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was able to establish a church, and as more territories were colonized in the Cape, the DRC grew, although with congregations consisting of white settlers (De Gruchy & De Gruchy, 2005). There were many attempts to evangelize indigenous San and Khoi communities, but these were sporadic and were not successful in the beginning (De Gruchy & De Gruchy, 2005). It was during the 19th century that the international missionary movement, expressing concern and motivating for the evangelization of the ‘heathen’, instituted Christianity amongst the native populations of South Africa (De Gruchy & De Gruchy, 2005; Thompson, 1990). Historically, Christianity advocated the idea of homosexuality as a sin, and insisted that individuals should not engage in any homosexual acts. This type of thinking was implemented through the establishment of missionary schools and churches, but also in broader societal institutions. During this period, individuals were not legally persecuted for engaging in homosexual activities, but such activities were deemed socially unacceptable (Thompson, 1990).

The Immorality Act (No. 5 of 1927) initially prohibited sexual relations between the European

settlers and the indigenous people. Between 1950 and 1988 it was revised numerous times to include, amongst other things, the prohibition of same-sex sexual relations (Carolin, 2017). During the 1950s and 1960s there were a few gay organizations that mobilised against this legislation and the related restriction of movement, but these organizations consisted mainly of white men (Cameron, 1994). White lesbians were not restricted in their movements, and the law was mainly enforced on gay men for their behaviours or practices which was different for white women who were pressurized to marry into heterosexual relationships and have children (Gevisser, 1994).

During the 1970s and 1980s, a homosexual subculture was prominent in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Even though homosexuality was present in other cities and rural areas, it was in both of these cities that bars and bath houses for white gay men visibly existed (Cameron, 1994). It must be noted that these spaces were not open and free as there was an element of secrecy and apprehension for gay men who chose to engage in these spaces as they could face negative repercussions. The creation of these limited spaces indicates how white middle- and upper-class gay men were able to express and perform their sexuality in underground prohibited public social spaces; this was not a possibility for non-heterosexual white women and this illustrates the heteropatriarchy that white lesbian women experienced even though they had the privilege of race on their side. Unlike white gay men, historically black LGBTQI+ individuals were not able to legally create or access public spaces in which to discuss or explore their concerns related to their sexual identities. It is important to note that despite the attainment of 'racial equality' in post-apartheid South Africa, black LGBTQI+ individuals still face the challenge of existing in public spaces that are accessible to them racially and economically (Mkhize et al., 2010).

As repression from the apartheid government mounted in the 1980s, black queer individuals mobilized against the double-layered oppression of homophobia and racism (Reddy, 2005). Organizations such as Lesbians and Gays Against Oppression (LAGO), the Organization of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA) and the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) were established. For the first time, formal LGBTQI+ organizations were not only located in white suburban areas; they were also made up of black individuals who came from different social and economic classes in urban areas. These organizations were critical in lobbying the African National Congress (ANC) to ensure that LGBTQI+ rights were included in negotiations with the apartheid government and ultimately in the new Constitution (Cameron, 1994). It is important to note the courage that black LGBTQI+ individuals such as Simon Nkoli and Phumi Mthethwa displayed in advocating for the intersection of race, gender and sexuality, and how these must be considered when drawing up the Constitution (Martin, 2020). These individuals and others organized with this approach in mind as a way to dismantle apartheid and achieve equality for all. An example of this was the first Pride march⁶ that was held in the central business district (CBD) of Johannesburg in 1990. This march brought together all LGBTQI+ individuals from different races and classes, which was a significant moment in the country (McLean, 2019).

Historically, the LGBTQI+ movement in South Africa has acknowledged bisexuality, but has not given it the same level of attention as it gives to the sexuality of lesbian and gay individuals, or recognized the prejudice and bigotry displayed towards bisexuals and how that is a different experience from that encountered by lesbians and gays (Chan-Sam, 1994). Bisexuals in the early 1990s were seen as individuals who experimented with their sexuality, transgressing binary

⁶ The Pride march is an event celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. It advocates for and self-acceptance, achievements, legal rights and pride.

logics and practices of sexuality. This definition has since changed over the decades, and this will be illustrated by my participants and how they describe or define bisexuality in their own words in chapters four and five. Bisexuals (both male and female) who were open about their sexuality commented that they still experienced judgement and prejudice from homosexuals whom they thought to be allies in the LGBTQI+ movement, and that they encountered even more prejudice than homosexuals (Chan-Sam, 1994). This made them unwilling to self-identify as bisexuals, and rather to say that they were sexually fluid⁷ or homosexual. Historically, South African LGBTQI+ individuals had faced discrimination from the government, but also marginalization due to the lack of public spaces in which they could socialize with other LGBTQI+ people. For bisexuals there was an added layer of prejudice, as they faced judgement within the LGBTQI+ movement, since in some quarters bisexuality was not considered a valid identity (Chan-Sam, 1994). Both challenges persist in present-day South Africa, and this makes it difficult for bisexuals to be open about their sexuality (Lynch & Maree, 2013).

The transition to democracy in South Africa ensured that the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals were protected in the Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Constitution has ensured that LGBTQI+ individuals are not discriminated against in any way because of their sexual orientation. Since the advent of democracy, more organizations have been established focusing on different issues affecting the LGBTQI+ community. These issues include the dissemination and preservation of queer knowledge (in the Gay and Lesbian Archive), a focus on transgender individuals (Gender DynamiX), health issues affecting LGBTQI+ individuals (OUT LGBT Well-being), creating a space for parents and friends to engage on LGBTQI+ issues (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays [PFLAG]) and

⁷ Sexually fluid identity can change throughout an individual's life, and may or may not align with biological sex, sexual behaviour or actual sexual orientation (Diamond, 2008).

research and advocacy work (the Triangle Project). These organizations are important for creating spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals to discuss and explore issues affecting them, but also for disseminating proper information to the broader society about the LGBTQI+ community. This, of course, has a history in South Africa, where black queer individuals used the limited space available to them to build community and feel safe, but also to advocate against the repressive regime of apartheid (Reddy, 2005). This space also allowed them to imagine a different type of political world, which is important in challenging inequalities. The creation of these post-apartheid organizations has led to some success in achieving these aims: a survey undertaken by the South African Institute of Race Relations in 2017 reported that nearly 80% of LGBTQI+ individuals did not experience discrimination at healthcare facilities, 67% of South Africans did not care if they lived with a homosexual, and 60% of surveyed individuals believed that LGBTQI+ individuals should not be sent to prison because of their sexual orientation (Morris, 2017). However, even though there have been considerable achievements and gains, there are still serious challenges facing LGBTQI+ individuals daily. Forty percent of LGBTQI+ individuals know of someone who has been murdered or experienced violence because of their sexual orientation, and many black LGBTQI+ individuals know of other black LGBTQI+ individuals who have experienced violence. This came to the fore during the Covid-19 pandemic, when there was a high level of violence inflicted on black LGBTQI+ individuals across the country (South African Government News Agency, 2021); the government was required to respond by ensuring that LGBTQI+ individuals were not harmed and were protected during a difficult period. This has meant that black LGBTQI+ individuals are less likely to be open about their sexuality, as they fear homophobic violence (Morris, 2017), a theme that will be discussed in this thesis.

Elsewhere in Africa, Botswana, Angola and Cabo Verde are examples of countries that have decriminalized homosexuality in recent years.⁸ The enshrinement of legal rights for LGBTQI+ individuals in certain countries has had both positive and negative influences in different societies. The positive impact is that there has been more social acceptance of LGBTQI+ individuals. The acceptance, though, has been of homosexual individuals, and has not been extended to other sexual minority groups (Flores & Park, 2018). The negative impact has been that the establishment of LGBTQI+ identities, mainly drawn from the West, has created fixed ideas, practices and beliefs relating to sexualities, and individuals are required to fit into certain sexual categories in order to gain political and social recognition (Bristow, 2011; Nyeck & Epprecht, 2013). This is of particular concern for individuals located in the Global South, where sexual identities, practices, languages and beliefs extend beyond the LGBTQI+ framework and different social factors, such as race and class, affect an individual's political recognition differently (Browne, 2015; Dutta, 2012; Matebeni, 2013).

Recently there has been an increase in the number of anti-LGBTQI+ laws that have been introduced, and even passed, in Ghana and Uganda (Budoo-Scholtz, 2023; Reid, 2022). These laws are part of a broader drive within the reignited anti-LGBTQI+ movement that already existed on the continent, and of course globally. There are several actors (governments, religious organizations, etc.) that are actively advocating for and pursuing laws that are transphobic and homophobic (Filipovic, 2023; van Klinken, 2020). Across the continent, there have been instances of violence inflicted on LGBTQI+ individuals in countries where the response has been minimal, because although these countries have decriminalized homosexuality, it is still frowned upon (Reid, 2022). This mixed bag of victories and challenges for LGBTQI+ individuals

⁸ See <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/where-african-countries-stand-in-their-struggle-toward-more-inclusive-lgbtq-laws>.

indicates that more work needs to be done to fight against this growing movement on the continent.

1.4 Research question and outline of the thesis

Given this context and the research gaps described above that this thesis focuses on bisexual women and their different experiences, beliefs, practices and performances of their sexual identity. The focus on women's bisexuality is additionally important in that it provides an insight into the continuous policing of women's bodies and their sexuality, to ensure that they conform to the heteronormativity desired the world over, and especially in South Africa. As mentioned earlier women regardless of their sexuality experience some form of regulation in public in relation to how they claim and express their sexuality. By focusing on bisexual women (not a unitary group, as will be shown throughout this study), I wanted to see if the regulation of women's sexuality was similar or there were unique experiences that bisexual women have.

The selection of bisexual women was firstly bias as I highlighted in my introduction and as mentioned earlier the focus on non-heterosexual women in sexuality studies has focused on lesbian women and recently transgender women. There has been limited research on bisexual women and this study aims to contribute towards studies on bisexual women.

The central research question of the thesis is:

How is bisexuality experienced, understood and performed in South Africa?

The study will explore the experiences of these women living in Johannesburg and the different social factors that affect them. The study will describe these women's experiences in an acknowledgement of the still 'hidden' nature of bisexuality, especially amongst women, but also

in ways that suggest something bigger about the fluid and non-identitarian nature of bisexuality as a distinct sexual practice (that is not always an identity).

The thesis will focus on bisexual women living in Johannesburg. In exploring the overall research question, I also consider the sub-questions listed below:

- What makes certain bisexual women ‘come out’ and others ‘not come out’?
- What roles does race, and class play in differential identity practices related to sexuality?
- How do urban spaces (clubs, bars, townships, suburbs, etc.) influence the identity and community of bisexual women?
- Does bisexuality trouble heteronormative and non-heteronormative sexual identities, and if so, how?
- What do these practices tell us about sexual cultures, practices and identities in South Africa, and beyond that, in the Global South?

Chapter 2 of the thesis will review literature that has looked at understandings of gender and sexuality. In that chapter I delve more deeply into some of the literature that I have discussed in this introduction. The significant themes I look at are:

- How sex and gender are constructed in society, and how this has influenced our understanding of sexuality, especially non-normative sexualities.
- How bisexuality has been understood in sexuality studies globally and in South African society.
- How race, class, space and age influence bisexuality in Johannesburg.
- How the regulation of women’s sexuality occurs/persists in African contexts.

In my engagement with all these themes, and throughout the thesis, I use an intersectional perspective. This approach was developed by black feminists in the US who argued that an individual will have overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). This was a critical perspective in my consideration of issues of race, class, age and space in relation to how bisexual women in South Africa experience their sexual identity, and in my examination of the challenges that exist when claiming a fluid sexual identity and allowing for its expression without boundaries or limits. A critique on intersectionality by Puar (2012) has argued that this framework reduces individuals to specific binary identities (i.e. race and gender) that are fixed and are viewed as the main factors for understanding individuals and their experiences, rather than viewing these markers as a part of the components of an individual that are nuanced, fluid and different depending on the context. For this study I was aware of this critique but using intersectionality was appropriate in the South African context. I attempted to not have these identity markers fixed in my analysis and this is shown by how respondents chose to identify themselves in terms of gender or how they understood what being bisexual means to them.

In Chapter 3, which is concerned with methodology and reflection, I detail how I used a life history approach in my study. I conducted interviews with my research participants in which we discussed how they had discovered their bisexuality and how they had been able to express and perform it in Johannesburg. My initial reflections on the research will be discussed in relation to the development of the questionnaire and the interview process, how I had to change my approach along the way because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and what this meant for the research.

I begin my analysis of my research findings in Chapter 4, by looking at how my participants came to the discovery of their bisexuality. For some of my participants this happened early in

their childhood, while for others it occurred later in life. I look at why there was this difference, and how it was shaped by their ages as well as by the times they were living in. I then look at what this discovery felt like for my participants, and how it shaped the ways in which they expressed their sexual identity amongst friends and family, taking into consideration religion and race.

In Chapter 5, I go on a journey in which I discuss why some of my participants have chosen to disclose their sexual identity and why others have not done so. In this chapter I look at the multiple factors affecting participants' decisions to disclose their sexual identity – to come out – and what this has meant for how they express themselves. In this chapter I foreground the element of violence and harassment, and how this has become critical in relation to disclosure – or not – especially as most of my participants are black women living in South Africa.

Chapter 6 looks at the city of Johannesburg, and how it has influenced the ways in which my participants have been able to perform their bisexuality in public. Johannesburg has a history of being an LGBTQI+-friendly space, but even in this context, challenges continue to confront my participants when they want to perform their sexuality in public. I explore the different spaces where my participants have been able to express themselves and build community with other bisexual and queer individuals, and how race and class continue to shape the ways in which they engage with the city. In terms of public space, I also look at the importance of the online space for bisexuals, and how this space has allowed them to express their sexual identity.

In Chapter 7, the final chapter of my analysis, I consider the harassment and violence that my participants have experienced, not only because of their bisexuality but also because they are women who are not heterosexual, and what the implications of this are for both queer and non-

queer communities.

In Chapter 8, the concluding chapter of the thesis, I reflect on how bisexuality is expressed in Johannesburg through the experiences of my participants, and what this says about how we understand and research sexual identities in the Global South. I also reflect on my own journey through this research process, and how it has informed and even changed my perspective on bisexuality and how it is understood. I also reflect on what can come next for our approach to understanding sexual identities, especially by bringing into the discussion queer joy, and its critical role in how we document marginalized sexualities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As noted in Chapter 1, sexuality studies is a field that has been growing since the 1970s, under the influence of the feminist movement in the Global North. On the African continent, the research in this field has been sporadic, with certain regions, such as Southern Africa, being documented and written about more than others. Researchers in some regions are still in the early stages of their work but are making thoughtful contributions to how we understand sexuality on the continent. I must note here that knowledge about queer individuals has always been present in Africa, in forms that are not deemed to be ‘knowledge’ by the standards of the Global North, as these forms have not met Global North criteria for being recognized as such (Macharia, 2016). The criteria that have been set thus far do not contextualize how knowledge is produced and understood in Global South countries, for example through storytelling across generations, which is a form of knowledge. These approaches are slowly starting to be included in bodies of

academic knowledge.

In South Africa, this field has only emerged and grown since the early 2000s, as a result of the HIV+ health crisis, and the focus on men having sex with men (MSM) and on the significant cases of violence inflicted on black lesbian bodies (Mkhize et al., 2010). This focus, of course, has evolved to look at other sexual identities, and at the nuanced experiences of being queer in the country. In all this research the focus on bisexual individuals, and specifically bisexual women, has been minimal; the research that has been done has looked at women who are lesbian. Recent studies, though, have started to consider other sexualities, such as transgender or queer individuals (Camminga, 2018; Jobson et al., 2012).

For me this context is important, as it makes the conversation on bisexual women in South Africa interesting in this moment when work is constantly being produced on the continent that looks at individuals who are not heterosexual, and are defining themselves outside the boundaries of sexuality studies, or queer studies as it is now defined. This has made it exciting, yet difficult, to keep up with the research and the writing up of this thesis. At the same time, this production of knowledge has significantly contributed to my own thoughts on how I have come to understand bisexuality in South Africa from a Global South perspective.

This chapter outlines the debates and contestations on various themes pertaining to bisexuality, such as the construction of sex and gender, bisexual erasure, heteronormativity, race and location, and how these have shaped different bisexual practices.

2.2 The construction of sex and gender

Before one can begin to look at sexuality, one must first look at how human beings have been socially categorized from birth based on a socialized understanding of biological sex in Western society. One of the most key features that categorizes human beings in this society is their sexual organs. Butler (2006) argues that once this difference is accepted, a hierarchy is created whereby a certain sexual organ (the phallus) is favoured more than another organ (the vagina). In religious literature, such as the Bible, Eve is described as being born from Adam. The masculine type of human in history is seen as the absolute type, while the feminine type is seen as imperfect because of her difference from the masculine type, and is therefore viewed as the 'Other'; since it does not have a phallus, the female body is immediately viewed as less than and subordinate to the male body (De Beauvoir, 1997). Numerous scholars have critiqued this binary sex categorisation (male/female), for example Fausto-Sterling (2020) in their book *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, which examines how this categorization is not scientific, but rather an intentional ordering to serve a particular purpose in the context of the society of that time. This binary removes individuals who are intersex and do not fit neatly into these categories (Fausto-Sterling, 2020). This then informs the idea of gender, as bodies are categorized as men or women, and this in turn ushers in the binary understanding of sex and gender. Both of these characteristics have informed how bodies are governed in relation to sexuality. The 'ideal' form of kinship between the two bodies is heterosexuality (Butler, 2006). Any deviation from this has historically been viewed as unnatural and immoral. Rich (1983) contends that Western society is organized in a particular way that favours heterosexuality. From the films we watch and the literature we read to the emphasis on a particular type of family (i.e., the nuclear family consisting of a man and a woman), heterosexuality is made to seem the norm

in Western society. This then informs the idea of heteronormativity, in which the sexual orientation between the genders is heterosexuality and everything else is viewed as unnatural or deviant. Rich (1983) argues that this 'norm' creates a 'compulsory heterosexuality', whereby individuals are significantly socialized into heterosexuality and non-heterosexual individuals are marginalized. Butler (2006) claims that all these different categorizations and forms of inequality contribute to a heterosexual matrix. This matrix works by viewing bodies physically in terms of binaries (male/female; man/woman), and views these bodies as heterosexual, which is the 'norm' until proven differently (Butler, 2006). Bodies that do not adhere to this matrix face the challenge of constantly asserting who they are in the face of it.

Two of the most significant factors that are central to an understanding of gender on the African continent are colonialism and the slave trade that existed from the 16th to the 19th century. In *Regarding Muslims: From Slavery to Post-apartheid*, Baderoon (2014) looks at slavery in the Cape Colony as perpetrated by the Dutch, and at how they had to create a division of labour and of bodies (male/female) to perform specific tasks in order to obtain and reproduce the labour required for the extraction of resources. African women's bodies were not their own, but rather were in service to others, specifically men. Gqola (2015) argues that under apartheid this did not change, as much of the violence inflicted on African women's bodies was perpetrated to regulate their performance of specific forms of labour (physical and reproductive) to benefit the apartheid regime. This way of thinking continues into the democratic dispensation, where the bodies of African women, and specifically black women, are viewed as not their own but rather as bodies to be regulated, or on which to inflict violence if they do not behave.

Amadiume's significant book *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (1987) looks at the Nnobi tribe that belongs to the Igbo community and argues that sex and gender did not reinforce each

other in creating a hierarchy between men and women in this tribe before colonization began.

Before the era of colonialism in what is now known as Nigeria, the roles of men and women, and their mutual expectations, were not rigidly defined; women and men had equal degrees of agency to perform different duties that serviced the community, regardless of their gender. Evidence of this is that daughters were allowed to be heads of households, and wealthy women could acquire multiple husbands. This example shows that women could occupy social positions or engage in relationships just like men during that time, as there was no gender hierarchy. Colonialism not only brought about social and economic changes in the lives of African men and women; it also introduced an enforced hierarchy and binaries between the genders and races (black/white), and a heteronormative belief when it came to sexual orientation (Amadiume, 1987).

Historians such as Epprecht (2008) have tried to document African sexualities, but this remains a challenge because of the lack of archival documentation. Even with this challenge, Epprecht has shown how different types of sexuality existed on the continent prior to colonialism in Southern Africa. Since the period of decolonization on the African continent, and as the decades have passed, research on sexuality on the continent has grown, but it still faces challenges. One of the biggest challenges to sexuality studies in Africa is the lack of recognition of homosexual identities in certain countries, which is greatly influenced by the different religions practised in these countries, as mentioned in Chapter 1 (Tamale, 2017). The result of this lack of recognition has been the idea that same-sex desires are ‘un-African,’ and are an import of colonialism (Carlse, 2018; Wahab, 2016). Again, a binary is created of what was ‘African’ and what was not ‘African’ historically, and this does not allow for the existence of nuance. Rao (2015) says that when looking at sexualities on the African continent historically, specifically hetero/homo relationships, we must not essentialise the experiences of the past in order to fit our present-day

arguments for the legitimacy of homosexual individuals or the legitimacy of heterosexuality. This essentialism does not allow for nuances and contexts to come to fore; rather, a silo-ing of sexualities occurs. Instead, there must be an understanding that when looking at sexualities on the continent, and even in the Global South more broadly, fluidity needs to be considered, and how it is expressed differently over time and in different geographies (Rao, 2015). Likewise, when trying to understand bisexuality from a Global South perspective, it struck me how this has been understood differently over time, even by my research participants.

2.3 Understanding sexuality

Even though gender and sexuality reinforce each other, they are separate identities of an individual (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009). Bristow (2011) argues that there has always been a difficulty in defining sexuality, as one does not know where it starts and stops. Does it begin and end with whom an individual sleeps with, and their intimate desires? Does it involve the behaviour and practices that an individual engages in privately? Does it involve how we define gender and sex? These are the questions that researchers continue to grapple with in different geographical contexts, and that I had to engage with. For this thesis, sexuality will be defined as encompassing sexual desires, sexual practices, sexual relationships and beliefs about sexuality (Jackson, 2006). Both gender and sexuality are influenced by the social understandings of selfhood, and by how individuals make sense of their different relationships to others and how this fits into the frameworks of cultural institutions, such as the law, religion, family and schools.

Sexuality, like sex and gender, has been constructed historically as dichotomous between heterosexuality and homosexuality (hetero/homo). According to Butler (2006), sexuality, like gender, also has a performative element. This means that sexuality is a constant repetition of

norms and performances that assist individuals in self-preservation, to adhere to the norms of the ‘ideal’ individual (Butler, 2006). Part of this performance is the individual’s selection of a romantic partner. Butler claims that when an individual selects a romantic partner, it demonstrates that individual’s sexual orientation (i.e., heterosexual or homosexual), and that certain norms and expectations come with that specific sexuality. It must be noted that the inclusion of homosexuality in the discussion of sexuality is a recent development in academic discourses that has resulted from the political movement founded by homosexual individuals to legitimize homosexuality (Flores & Park, 2018).

Foucault (1978), in his book *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, says that sexuality is defined by external social factors (i.e., race, the media, etc.) combined with attraction, practices and desires. What this means is that sexuality is not only constructed by an individual’s desires or practices, but also by what society views as attractive and desirable. Currently, sexuality studies have taken a ‘single-sex attraction’ perspective: an understanding of sexuality in binary terms.

Homosexuality and heterosexuality are thus rendered the only valid forms of identity, and it is assumed that a person is attracted to either the same gender or a different (‘opposite’) one (Hayfield et al., 2014). Bisexuality does not fit into this binary categorization, as it argues for sexuality to be fluid rather than fixed. This means that an individual can be attracted to more than one gender – to multiple genders or to gender-non-conforming individuals – over a lifespan. This sexuality will be influenced by both internal characteristics of the individual and external factors that exist where the individual is located.

In this thesis it was important for me to look at women’s sexuality, and how it has been constructed in different contexts over time. De Beauvoir (1997) argues that women have been defined as the ‘Other’ in society by men, as they do not have the same sexual organs as men, and

this is seen as rendering them ‘less than’. As a result, women are not prioritized as central in society, and their needs and wants are viewed as secondary to those of men. This has influenced all aspects of society, where economically, politically and socially women continue to be viewed as ‘less than.’ This hierarchy has also occurred in relation to sexuality, as women in various parts of the world have had their sexuality viewed as being in service to men, and not to themselves. The end of colonialism occurred at different times in various parts of the world, and of course specific racial and economic contexts had to be considered in studies looking at women’s fight for equality. This has resulted in the fight for equal rights being conducted in diverse ways by women in the Global South, and even more so by women who have multiple marginalized identities in terms of race and class. Mohanty (1984) claims that for women in the Global South, individual choice (i.e., the ability to choose what to do with their bodies) has not occurred in the same way as for women in the Global North, as the state continues to play a role in undermining women’s autonomy. An example of this lies in the sphere of sexual health and reproductive rights (SHRR). In some parts of the Global South, and on the African continent in particular, women have not had access to these rights and can face criminal charges if they engage in any SHRR actions such as abortion. Even though SHRR have historically been seen as firmly secured in countries of the Global North⁹, the recent reversal of abortion rights in the US shows how the state in this part of the world, just like states in the Global South, has control over women’s bodies (Hubler, 2022). This reversal is significant, as it could signal the beginning of other reversals of rights, such as LGBTQI+ rights, and indicates how women across the globe still face challenges to their autonomy regarding their bodies.

Regarding sexualities, LGBTQI+ rights have not been won for all women in the Global South,

⁹ Global North countries are characterized by a high level of economic and industrial development (Lees, 2021).

and therefore the ability to express and perform their sexuality continues to be a challenge for these women. In other parts of the Global South women have been engaging in same-sex desires, behaviours and practices but just like the South African context they have faced violence because of their sexuality. In India, for instance, women are in same-sex relationships, they are selective as to where and with whom they can express their sexuality (Puri, 2002). Homosexuality continues to be frowned upon in India and therefore LGBTQI+ individuals have been intentional about creating spaces to express their sexuality both in private and public spaces (Khubchandani, 2020). Elsewhere too, queer women have had to be innovative in terms of how they express their sexuality. Gqola (2015) has looked extensively at women's sexuality in South Africa, and in her book *Rape: A South African Nightmare* she argues that women who do not perform or express the 'preferred' sexual identity, i.e., heterosexuality, must negotiate how they perform their identity as they could face life-threatening violence. This is because the idea of a woman having sexual desires that affirm her sexuality as an individual, or in a same-sex relationship, is viewed as unacceptable (Shefer & Foster, 2001). Women's sexuality must be in service to the sexuality of men, which sustains the hierarchical patriarchal structure. In the book *Blackwashing Homophobia: Violence and the Politics of Sexuality, Gender and Race*, Judge (2018) makes the point that in the South African context, even though LGBTQI+ rights have been gained in terms of the law, women are not able to express their sexuality as the threat of violence they face is serious, especially for lesbian women. This becomes even more complex when race and class identities are brought into play; black women must negotiate their sexuality differently from white women, as they face multiple forms of oppression. It is important to note this difference, as not all women in the Global South will have the same experience in relation to their sexuality. This difference is considered in my analysis presented in the following chapters.

For women living in the Global South, how they choose to express and perform their sexuality is different depending on the context. There continue to be expectations of how they should perform their sexuality in relation to reproductive labour, and if they do not perform this function, part of their sexuality is questioned. Women who are non-heterosexual face the same challenges as heterosexual women, but they face the added challenge of being non-heterosexual, which continues to be questioned as a legitimate sexuality even though legal rights to this sexuality have been gained. Women in these contexts have found non-traditional spaces where they can carve out loving relationships and claim their sexuality with other queer individuals.

2.4 Lesbianism

Whenever we look at sexuality studies it is important to examine how a lesbian perspective has influenced these studies. Most sexuality studies have historically focused on gay and lesbian experiences from the Global North. Achuthan et al. (2007), in looking at India, highlight that the studies on lesbians and other sexual identities that women have were influenced by the US women's movements of the 1960s, and by the significant contribution made by political lesbians. These women are women who claim their sexuality is highly intertwined with their feminist politics (Phelan, 1993). In India, lesbian women have played a critical role in highlighting the challenges and experiences they face, and how these need to be addressed through research and activism. It is a study like this and others that have contributed to the significant work that has been done to highlight the challenges that women face globally, regardless of their sexuality.

Many lesbian writers have contributed to the canon of feminism by looking at the inequality between the sexes from a lesbian perspective. Wittig (1983), like other feminists, begins with the social construction of sex and how women are viewed as secondary to men. Critical to her work

is her contention that the only reason the category 'woman' exists is because of its relation to the category 'man.' This means that the idea of a woman has not been created independently, but rather in service to man. This, of course, has been translated into women's sexuality being defined as heterosexuality, with no other option, as their sexuality must be in service to men's needs. As mentioned earlier, activist and author Rich (1983) has added to Wittig's critique of the sexual order and sexuality by arguing that a 'compulsory heterosexuality' occurs in society, and the result is the marginalization of identities that do not fall in line with this identity. Rubin (1975) tried to show that the relations between the sexes were in service to heterosexuality, and that if women could move away from this form of sexuality they could break the nexus of the relationship between the sexes and challenge other spaces in society (i.e., economic spaces) to break free of their oppression as women) In *The Traffic of Women*, which looks at how the sex and gender binary that has been created in society ultimately puts women at a disadvantage, Rubin (1975) argues, using a Marxist lens, that the sex and gender binary in a capitalist society views humans as sources of labour to extract, but views women specifically as labour for domestic work. A socialist revolution would not remove the root of women's oppression, which is not only tied to women's labour value. Rubin looks at how society is organized outside of the economy and argues that the Oedipal complex theorized by Freud shows how sex and gender were not inherited through biology but rather constructed through early childhood for different bodies, with the phallus being centred and those without a phallus in service to it. This influences the sex and gender binary, as it means that women will always be at a disadvantage relative to men. The centring of the phallus extends into sexuality, as the heteropatriarchy does not allow women to be at the centre of their own sexuality, but only in service to men. To have a complete feminist revolution, Rubin argues, there must be a reconfiguration of the sex and gender binary,

also in terms of sexuality: women should move away from heterosexuality, which is deemed as normal sexuality, and form different types of romantic relationships, i.e., homosexual ones (Rubin, 1975). For women, then, the ‘choice’ that they are making is not really a choice, as society is organized in a way such that heterosexuality is forced upon them, and they must submit or otherwise face challenges in all aspects of their lives – in this instance, concerning how to express or perform their sexuality. This therefore marginalizes non-heterosexual women, who must find different ways to express their sexuality.

For Wittig (1983), Rich (1983) and Rubin (1975), women need to challenge this structural oppression of heterosexuality by engaging in same-sex relations. Many lesbian feminists argue that to truly be a feminist, women must first reject the category of ‘woman,’ as it views them from the outset as ‘less than’. They must also reject heterosexuality, as it exists only in service to men’s needs, desires, attractions and behaviours, and does not reciprocate this service for women. One of the significant contributors to political lesbianism in the US, Grace Atkinson, articulated the position of the movement by saying ‘feminism is the theory; lesbianism is the practice’ (Jackson & Scott, 1996, p. 282). For these women it is simply not enough to have an ideology that challenges heterosexuality and the norms and expectations of women; women must challenge this form of oppression by rejecting heterosexuality in their daily lives as much as possible. What then occurs for lesbian women is that their sexuality becomes a part of their political identity. This is not unique to groups that are marginalized, as they place what has historically marginalized them (race, class, gender) at the forefront of their political fight for equality (Achuthan et al., 2007). This has historically led to tensions on how feminism is defined as some feminists believe that gender and sexuality are different aspects of an individual, and that inequality should be mapped according to gender and not sexuality, while lesbians who are

feminists believe that these aspects are intertwined and cannot be separated if dismantling the heteropatriarchy is the ultimate goal. Lesbian feminists and feminists who are not lesbians agree on fighting for bodily autonomy for women, but they differ in how they map the importance of sexuality in the subjugation of women.

Phelan (1993) argues that for political lesbians, sexuality is as critical as gender and must be viewed as central to mapping out the inequality experienced by women. Lesbianism is strongly associated with women who reject any form of heterosexuality in both public and private spaces. At the same time, Phelan does argue that this identity must not be fixed; it can be fluid, and influenced by the local contexts where lesbian women are located. What this means is that challenging heterosexuality will be different depending on the time and context, and lesbianism must not restrict itself to one way of thinking – it must be in conversation with and respond accordingly to context. I believe that this is a significant argument when looking at sexualities in the Global South, where context is important, and at how women in the Global South have challenged heterosexuality in ways that look different from the challenges of women in the Global North.

In the Global South, the idea of their sexuality being a rallying cry for women has not occurred in the same way as it has in the Global North. As mentioned earlier, for women in the Global South other issues such as national liberation and racial or economic exclusion have been the catalyst for the fight for equality. Women in these parts of the world have organized against an oppressive system that viewed their assigned gender, race or ethnicity as ‘less than.’ The result of this was that race and ethnicity became critical features of their identity, and for how they constructed their own femininity in relation to this added layer of colonial oppression (Mohanty, 1984). The history of the women’s movement in South Africa can be traced back to the white

feminist movement, which in 1899 founded the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) that was concerned with banning the trading of alcohol, but also collaborated with other white feminist organizations in securing the vote for white women. These women were only concerned with issues affecting themselves, and not with the lives of women of colour. In subsequent decades, pressure from political organizations, as well as from black women's movements, forced the white women's movement to shift its focus towards prioritizing issues of race and class, and the defeat of apartheid (Walker, 1990).

Women of colour in South Africa fought against gender inequality as well as the racial inequality of apartheid. In *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*, Hassim (2006) looks at the women's movements of both white women and women of colour in the country. Women of colour have always been engaged in organizing, but their fight was part of the broader struggle against apartheid. The women in the anti-apartheid liberation movement were viewed as 'the mothers of the liberation movement,' which strongly associated them with being nurturers and carers, rather than fighters within the movement, which they were (Hassim, 2006). As a result, women's issues have always been viewed as secondary to the liberation movement. During the fight against Apartheid the focus was on racial justice and initially not only about racial justice but also gender justice (Andrews, 2001). Women of different races in the liberation movement during the late 80's early 90's had to organise and advocate for the inclusion of women's rights and issues when political negotiations were occurring before 1994. This signals how firstly issues of gender were a blind spot in the movement, but you had women who were able to show how the movement had to include issues that were affecting women (e.g. leadership, childcare, violence, race) in the new dispensation (Andrews, 2001). At the same time the raising of these issues during and post 1994 has meant that there has been a particular prioritisation of issues

affecting women and a sidelining of other issues such as sexuality which affects both men and women (Reddy, 2005). This of course shifted once the HIV/AIDS crisis occurred and a focus on sexuality had to be considered by all. Even while facing this challenge, women before and after the advent of democracy were able to foreground the issues affecting them and others, such as LGBTQI+ issues. The lesbian movement in South Africa publicly stemmed from the activism of white women who were challenging the Immorality Act (No. 23 of 1957)¹⁰ that, amongst other things, prohibited same-sex relations. During the 1950s and 1960s there were a few gay organizations that mobilised against this legislation and the related restrictions on movement, but these organizations consisted mainly of white men (Cameron, 1994). Even though white lesbians were not restricted in movement and the law was mainly enforced for gay men, there was still great pressure for white women to remain closeted and not express their sexuality. white men were allowed to be single and gay, but white women were pressurized to marry and have children (Gevisser, 1994).

Research on women in South Africa started to grow in the early 2000s, when the high levels of violence against women, especially lesbian women, came to the fore (Judge, 2018). It must be noted that violence against all LGBTQI+ individuals had been occurring prior to this, but there was a specific form of violence that black lesbian women experienced. Baderoon (2014), in her work on enslaved women, claims that for women of that time their sexuality was constantly in a state of tension between those who wanted to control it and themselves, something that has not changed. Lesbian women engage in behaviour that is not viewed as ‘proper,’ and therefore force must be used to regulate and control them. This violence is perpetrated mainly against black women, and not against white lesbians in South Africa. The black female body is under more

¹⁰ The Immorality Act of 1957 was updated from the 1927 Act to include discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals.

scrutiny that the white female body. Research on this form of violence continues, as attacks on non-heterosexual women and even queer individuals continue to occur. This was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic when violence against LGBTQI+ individuals increased significantly in the country and the continent (Allen-Gessesse, 2020; South African Government News Agency, 2021).

Mbasalaki (2020) argues that the violence inflicted on lesbian women has become ‘customary’, as women who are in non-heterosexual relationships will undeniably face some form of violence or harassment and this is part of the norm in South Africa. In seeking justice, lesbian women are failed by the justice system, as underpinning the legal system is a hegemonic colonial, patriarchal and racial bias which continues to exist. A vicious cycle occurs whereby black lesbian women and other queer women withstand the worst of this structural inequality in their quest to challenge the system; this is true especially for black women, who face the added layers of racial and class marginalization. This is an important point, as it shows that even though there is a progressive Constitution in South Africa, lesbian women still cannot access or express their sexuality, the right to which has been guaranteed by the Constitution. It must be noted that research has focused on lesbian women and has not included other queer women, such as bisexual women, who have also experienced violence and harassment; their experiences have not been documented in the same way as has been done for lesbian women. The focus on lesbian women has influenced the idea of what it means to be a lesbian on the continent. This, I believe, overshadows the experiences of other queer women; but it also highlights only one type of experience for lesbian women, where violence is inflicted upon them. The dominant portrayal of black lesbian women is as survivors of violence, which presents a very one-dimensional perspective of who they are. Judge (2018) calls this the ‘blackwashing’ of homophobia that

occurs in South Africa and claims that the ways in which violent incidents against LGBTQI+ individuals are researched and reported in the media create a narrative that homophobia only occurs in black spaces, especially those spaces where there are high levels of poverty. This 'blackwashing' then presents black lesbians only in this victim role, which does not depict the fullness of who they are.

Some work has been done that has tried to create a different narrative of lesbian women in the country. Muholi's (2012) photographic work has shifted the idea of lesbian women away from being only victims of violence by showing them also as human beings who are claiming their sexual identity in public and confronting the challenges that come with that. The work is centred on lesbians but does include depictions of other queer women, showing the sexual desires and intimacies of queer women that had not been seen before in South Africa. This has been met, of course, with a backlash, as government officials and the media have frowned upon this public display of sexuality (Lake, 2014). What this indicates is that when queer women choose to express their sexuality outside of what is deemed 'appropriate,' their actions must be corrected.

In the South African context, addressing gender inequality is intersectional, and therefore issues of race, class and gender need to be considered alongside the issue of sexuality. The task of separating the women's movement from lesbianism in South Africa is a difficult one, because of how intertwined lesbianism and feminism are in the country. This is, of course, not unique to South Africa, as other women's movements across the globe must engage in this relationship with lesbianism and each has had varying degrees of success and faced various challenges in doing so.

2.5 Queerness in Africa

Before describing what queerness on the continent was in the past and is currently, I believe that it is important to define what the word ‘queer’ means. As earlier, the word ‘queer’ is in reference to that which is not the norm or considered legitimate. Ahmed (2006: 32) uses this definition to look at queer bodies and argues that these bodies are understood in society as not ‘falling in line’ with heterosexuality, but rather choosing to orient themselves differently. To be queer means to be different, and not abide by the norm which extends itself to all aspects of society, and in this case to sexuality.

Historically on the continent the word queer, and even the term ‘LGBTQI+,’ were words that were not used, although individuals did engage in same-sex relations. An example of such same-sex relations can be found in the Buganda kingdom, where the king himself and others engaged in same-sex and opposite-sex relations, which were accepted by society and not frowned upon (Rao, 2015). Same-sex relations were not something that was foreign to the people of the continent. Nyeck and Epprecht (2013) argue that evidence of these relationships goes against the idea of same-sex desires being ‘un-African’ on the continent, but this idea continues to exist. One of the reasons why it persists is because of the role of religion on the continent. Organised large-scale religion in Africa can be traced back to as early as the 7th century, and to the influence of colonialism through the trade relationships that African societies formed with Europe (which introduced Christianity) and Southwest Asia (which introduced Islam) (Reese, 2014). Religion brought with it multiple ideas on what is wrong and what is right, and same-sex desires were deemed ‘immoral’ in terms of both Christianity and Islam. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the continent is still heavily influenced by religion and this makes it difficult for LGBTQI+ individuals to be able to claim their sexuality publicly, as they are faced with this severe form of

homophobia. In this thesis the term queer will refer to all LGBTQI+ individuals.

A lot has been written about the tensions between those who view homosexuality as being un-African and those who have provided evidence for its existence in the precolonial era, but Rao (2015) argues that this constant binary does not allow for the nuances of this topic to be identified. This I believe is important, as the binary discussion falls in line with the binary understanding of gender and sexuality and does not permit a fluid understanding of sexuality. Allowing a fluid understanding of sexuality to occur makes it possible to understand queerness on the continent in ways that do not sit within the neatly confined identities in terms of which we understand sexuality now. An example can be made of women in Uganda, who engaged in same-sex relations before the advent of colonialism and continue to do so in their communities today (Wa Tushabe, 2017). These women have been able to publicly express their sexual identity without it being labelled 'lesbian,' and the community is accepting of who they are. Sexuality on the continent is constructed in different ways, especially for women. Another example is the women in Ghana called '*supi*,' who engage in same-sex relations with each other in ways that are not publicly visible but are acknowledged by others in the community (Dankwa, 2021). This type of relationship is viewed as a close friendship, and therefore does not raise as much suspicion in Ghana as homosexuality, which is still illegal there. Dankwa argues that when looking at sexualities on the continent, we need to adopt a postcolonial feminist approach in which we remove the naming and hierarchies created by race and gender, as these are colonial imports. This will allow us to contextualize how same-sex desire has occurred and continues to occur, in ways that do not fit the idea of homosexuality taken from the Global North. The fluid nature of bisexuality allows for sexual practices, behaviours and desires to be looked at in a contextual manner, without assigning a specific sexual identity to them. This is evident in the

multiple definitions of what bisexuality is, many of which allow for a range of ideas about what sexualities can be, without assigning particular ideas of gender, race and class that continue to disadvantage women.

Different terms have been used to describe queer individuals and communities on the continent, specifically from a Global North perspective. Otu and van Klinken (2023) claim that after the end of colonialism and the fight for democratic independence, 'LGBTQI+ rights' was the term used to describe different sexual identities that did not subscribe to heteronormativity but deserved equal legal rights to it. Fighting for LGBTQI+ rights was a tactic used by activists in the Global North and in Africa to gain legitimacy for homosexual rights. The term was also used in a human rights framework, to show that for African countries to be perceived as progressive and 'moving forward' politically, they would need to support recognition of LGBTQI+ rights (Otu & van Klinken, 2023). The result of this has been a discussion centred on a 'yes/no' view of the legitimacy of queer identities, without taking into consideration the lived realities of the people concerned. It also creates an idea of those living in Africa or in the Global South as not being 'modern' if they do not subscribe to this framework. Examples of this are the 'anti-LGBTQI' bill in Ghana and the recent homophobic bill that was passed in Uganda, which have both been used as part of a narrative of Africa as a continent that is still behind and 'in the dark' (Otu & van Klinken, 2023).

The tactics referred to above are still used by activists and movements to gain political recognition. The positive impact they have had is that there have been legal rights gained and more social acceptance of LGBTQI+ individuals in South Africa, Angola and Botswana (Reid, 2022). The acceptance, however, has been of homosexual individuals, with not enough acceptance of other sexual minority groups (Flores & Park, 2018). The negative outcome of this

has been that the establishment of LGBTQI+ identities has created fixed ideas, practices and beliefs about sexualities, and individuals are required to fit into these categories to gain political and social recognition (Bristow, 2011; Nyeck & Epprecht, 2013).

In recent discussions, Abbas and Ekine (2013) have argued that the word 'queer' has resonated with queer activists and scholars on the continent within a framework that seeks to challenge the structural inequalities of society such as patriarchy, capitalism, gender and sexualities. The idea behind this way of thinking, like the origin of the word queer, is to be different from the norm and challenge it, in terms of not only sexuality but all forms of inequality. The word queer is used in this revolutionary way to frame the discussion on sexualities in a manner that considers other factors that play a critical role in influencing sexual identities. The concept 'queer' allows for different words to be used when describing sexualities that do not fit neatly into LGBTQI+ framework. It allows for a recognition of legal rights for queer individuals, which is important; but I believe its further significance lies in its fundamental structural analysis from a perspective of being 'the other,' an analysis that recognizes how structural inequalities affect the ways in which sexualities are constructed on the continent. The idea of 'queer studies' stems from Global North perspectives, but scholars such as Currier and Migraine-George (2016) have advocated for research that takes into consideration national and local contexts in shaping an individual's sexuality and places more emphasis on transnational queer studies. Transnational queer studies seek to move away from binary understandings of sexuality, and from the mismatch present in sex/gender/desire ideology and ground the research in an intersectional framework. This approach is evident in South Africa, where academic research has focused on studies of lesbians and gays and the construction of their sexual identities in relation to class and race (Mkhize et al., 2010; Reddy et al., 2009).

Queer studies in Africa have grown considerably, and writers on the continent are using an intersectional lens to examine contextually what it means to be queer. Ncube and van Klinken (2023), for instance, consider the work of Abdellah Taïa, who was the first openly gay Moroccan novelist, and how they were able to express their sexuality in a country that views homosexuality as illegal. Meneses (2022) looks at the struggles of the women's movement in Mozambique. Both of these contributions are documenting queer and gendered experiences in a contextual manner, emphasizing religion, gender and sexuality on the African continent. This has allowed for the fullness of queer individuals' existence to be discussed, which is important if we want to engage in transnational queer studies. More and more writers on the continent are beginning to write about queer experience, which is important for decentring queer studies from the Global North. In her book *Sex in Transition: Remaking Gender and Race in South Africa*, Swarr (2012) looks at how certain bodies transgressed the hetero/homo and man/woman binary during the apartheid era and the period of transition to democracy. Swarr claims that whether they were butch lesbians or drag queens in the townships, these individuals challenged Global North understandings of the binaries through how they performed their sexuality, expressing themselves in a manner that did not conform to previous understandings of how certain bodies should behave. This was important, as it was being done at the time by black individuals living in townships and shows how these marginalized groups challenged ideas of gender and sexuality that continue to be present today. It also shows how sexualities on the continent do not adhere to Global North understandings of gender and sexuality, and how locating queer studies in their context is important.

The importance of African writers writing about queer individuals on the continent is that this is critical to balancing the canon of queer studies between the Global North and the Global South.

A lot of the writing on queer studies in Africa has been dominated by Global North scholars. This does not mean that Global North scholars do not have the experience to write on this subject, but Macharia (2016) argues that fetishization of African queer bodies occurs in these scholars' work, as it reproduces the unequal relations stemming from colonialism. Macharia takes this argument even further, claiming that the production of knowledge in the Global North about queer individuals in the Global South has created a dynamic in which Global South scholars or writers who write on queer studies must meet external criteria from the Global North in order for their work to be viewed as valid (Macharia, 2016). It is important for queer scholars in the Global South to write about each other without seeking to gain legitimacy in Global North academic spaces; this should not be the goal of their knowledge production. I believe, as Macharia argues, as mentioned earlier that we need to begin to write about same-sex relations in a richer language from those living and working in the Global South.

2.6 Bisexuality

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, bisexuality is one form of sexuality that does not fit into the hetero/homo binary, does not subscribe to the idea of single-sex attraction, and contests fixed LGBTQI+ identities. One of the reasons why bisexuality challenges conventional understandings of sexuality is because definitions of bisexuality have changed over the centuries (Barker & Langdrige, 2008; Klesse, 2011). According to MacDowall (2009, p. 4), bisexuality in the 19th century was defined as 'forms of life that exhibit physical characteristics of both sexes.' Freud acknowledged bisexuality in his work as a form of sexuality but viewed it as a transitory state from which an individual would mature into either a heterosexual or a homosexual identity (Carey, 2005). It was the significant research on sexuality by Alfred Kinsey that was able to

emphasize not only the fluidity of sexuality, but also the idea of bisexuality as the ‘middle ground’ of different sexual identities (Hemmings, 2002).

Hemmings argues that the ‘middle ground’ on which bisexuality is defined means that it is viewed through the binary lens of attraction to males and females. One of the consequences of this is that bisexuality has been viewed in a negative light, as it is associated with being ‘selfish’ and ‘promiscuous,’ an idea that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 (Klesse, 2005; Rust, 2002). These negative connotations have led some bisexuals to refrain from disclosing their bisexuality. Klesse (2005) takes the discussion further, claiming that the ‘middle ground’ of bisexuality has also allowed for bisexuals to be viewed as enjoying heterosexual privilege if they are with someone of the opposite sex instead of being with an individual of the same sex, as they visibly seem to be engaging in a heterosexual relationship and are not having to express their non-heterosexual identity. This assumes that bisexual individuals are more likely to be normatively gendered (i.e., cisgendered) than lesbian- and gay-identified individuals. Lynch (2013) claims that the assumption of bisexuals’ heterosexuality is also reinforced by the assumption that other-gendered relationships are automatically heterosexual, without consideration for the individual’s sexual identification within the relationship. The lack of discussion of diverse interpretations of bisexuality within contemporary studies reinforces the idea of bisexuality only being the ‘middle ground’, and still being considered within the sex and gender binaries. This limitation does not allow bisexuality, with its potential multiple definitions, to transcend the categorization of sexual identities (Hemmings, 2002; Souto Pereira et al., 2017).

Bisexuality, like other sexual labels, has historically been defined by scholars and activists in the US and the UK, and these definitions have been used globally without taking into consideration local contexts outside those spaces (Milani & Lazar, 2017). In Hawaiian and Tahitian culture, the

word '*mahus*' is used to describe individuals who are third-gender persons and have spiritual and social status within their society, and is akin to transgender individuals (Kulick, 1997). In India, '*kothi*' is a term used to describe individuals who are on the spectrum of gender identity and do not fit into the Western concept of transgender individuals. This has led to this group being socially and economically marginalized, as they are not seen as 'respectable', and they do not conform to Western ideas of sexuality that are widely disseminated (Dutta, 2013; Reddy, 2005). In South Africa, the word '*stabane*' has had multiple meanings. During the gold rush in the late 1800s the word was used by Zulu men working on the mines, and it was associated with banditry and 'sodomy' as the men were stealing from each other or sleeping with each other in the mine hostels (Marwick, 1918). Another use of the word was to refer in a derogatory manner to an individual who had both male and female sexual organs and was considered to be 'bisexual'. Today it is used to refer to LGBTQI+ individuals in an offensive manner (Swarr, 2009). Sexual definitions, ideas and practices stemming from non-Western spaces contest fixed sexual identities, but also have different economic and social implications depending on their local contexts (Dutta, 2013; Salo et al., 2010). This needs to be taken into consideration when looking at sexualities located in the Global South, which has been done in this thesis by looking at bisexuality from a South African perspective. Bisexuality as mentioned earlier challenges the binary understanding of sexuality which Butler (2006) claims aligns it with queer identities. Butler (2006) argues that bisexuality has the potential to destabilize the idea that the socialized biological understanding of sex of an individual influences their gender, and ultimately shapes their sexual desire in terms of one gender. Bisexuality fundamentally transgresses the idea of gender being static and the idea of single-sex attraction. Scholars have associated queer theory with bisexuality because it is a marginalized sexuality in the research and in society, but also

because it challenges the binaries and mismatches of desire that exist in sexuality studies (Stein & Plummer, 1994).

Bristow (2011) argues that bisexuality is critical to queer studies, as it not only transcends the sexual categories but also contests the patriarchy and heteronormativity that exists in society, by offering different perspectives and understandings of gender and sexuality. This is critical for women who identify with queer identities. Both queer men and queer women face homophobia, but as MacKinnon (1997) argues, men define women's sexuality. The idea that a woman needs to be dominated and her body needs to be regulated stems from a male perspective. Women who engage in non-heteronormative relationships challenge this idea, and the consequence of that has sometimes been sexual and physical violence (MacKinnon, 1997). As mentioned earlier, Gqola (2015) claims that the violence inflicted upon women's bodies illustrates the extreme form of heteronormativity that queer women experience and the constant pressure of women's bodies to conform to heterosexuality.

Since the dominant research and activism of sexuality studies historically focused on lesbians and gays, homosexuality has been able to establish itself as a legitimate identity in certain countries and contest the heteronormativity found in these societies (Barker & Langdrige, 2008). Lynch and Maree (2013) argue that heteronormativity is promulgated through institutions such as heterosexual marriage, heterosexual relations and the nuclear family. The recognition of non-heterosexual identities challenges this belief in all spheres of society. When looking at South Africa, Chan-Sam (1994) claims that the LGBTQI+ movement historically acknowledged bisexuality but did not give the same attention to bisexuality issues as it did to issues concerning lesbians and gay individuals. Some of the issues affecting bisexuals before the advent of democracy were prejudice and bigotry towards bisexuals, and that experience was different to

the bigotry experienced by lesbians and gays (Chan-Sam, 1994). Bisexuality at the time was defined as engaging in non-hetero/homo practices. Bisexuals (both male and female) who were open about their sexuality commented that they still encountered judgement and prejudice from homosexuals whom they thought to be allies in the LGBTIQ+ movement, and at times they felt even more prejudice than homosexuals (Chan-Sam, 1994). This made bisexuals at the time unwilling to self-identity as bisexuals and caused them rather to say that they were sexually fluid or homosexual (Chan-Sam, 1994). The added layer of prejudice that bisexuals faced within and outside the LGBTIQ+ movement continues to exist, and for Lynch and Maree (2013) this makes it difficult for bisexuals to be open about their sexuality. Research looking at the bisexual experience in South Africa has been limited (Lynch & Maree, 2013, 2017). Most of the work on sexuality, as mentioned earlier, is concerned with MSM and its impact on HIV infection rates. This, as previously stated, is because of the high infection rates in the country, particularly amongst gay men rather than lesbian and bisexual women, who are viewed as 'low risk' in this regard. Other research has looked at the attitudes and beliefs regarding bisexual individuals (Arndt & De Bruin, 2011; Beyrer et al., 2010; Cloete et al., 2008).

Once an individual has identified as bisexual, they still face challenges in asserting their sexuality. Flanders and Hatfield (2014) argue that bisexuality is never given the same space as gay and lesbian identities and is often not viewed as a legitimate identity. One of the ways in which this delegitimization occurs is through the hetero/homo binary that has been established in sexual identification, as previously discussed. Bisexuality fundamentally goes against the theory of desiring one sex, and thus destabilizes the hetero/homo binary and the idea of fixed sexual identities. Yoshino (2000), in their crucial work *The Epistemic Contract of Bisexual Erasure*, argues that bisexuality undermines the idea of sex being the primary characteristic in sexual

attraction. It is therefore in the interest of both homosexuals and heterosexuals to not acknowledge and legitimize bisexuals. There occurs an 'epistemic contract of erasure' of bisexuals (Yoshino, 2000, p. 103). This erasure occurs through social erasure, individual erasure and ultimately delegitimation. Social erasure occurs when bisexuality is denied as a sexual identity (Yoshino, 2000). Individual erasure occurs when bisexuals do not claim their sexuality in private and public spaces, resulting in the questioning of bisexuality as a legitimate sexuality.

Hemmings (2002) argues that for bisexuals, the selection of a romantic partner does not signify their sexual orientation. If a bisexual individual is with an individual of the opposite sex, it does not mean they are heterosexual, and if the individual is with a person of the same sex, it does not mean they are homosexual (Hemmings, 2002). This inconsistent subject-object choice defies the hetero/homo binary. Hemmings (2002) has shown that another element of the heterosexual matrix is the idea of masculinity and femininity occupying oppositional roles. This occurs regardless of heterosexual or homosexual orientation. Language such as 'mannish woman' and 'effeminate man' is used to describe individuals who transgress strict gender and sexuality norms. Hemmings (2002) argues that for bisexuals, since there is no consistent selection of a romantic partner, they cannot be classified in terms of the hetero/homo binary, but rather have a fluid sexuality. The fluidity of bisexuality is one of the factors that cause tensions in relation to some lesbian women. Hemmings claims bisexuality transgresses the current understandings of sexuality studies, as it argues for not being 'the middle ground in sexuality studies' (2002, p. 52) but rather moving away from the limited socialized binary understandings of sexual practices, beliefs and desires.

Instead of moving away from the binary, social institutions have tried to maintain this binary and erasure of 'others'. One way in which this has been done is through research. Historically within

academia, research conducted would explicitly state that bisexual individuals are homosexuals in denial or in transition, thus rendering bisexuality non-existent (Ochs, 1996). Another example of bisexual erasure occurs through the media. Barker and Langdridge (2008) argue that when fictional characters in the media are attracted to a person of the same sex, rather than of the opposite sex to whom they were previously attracted, they are seen as becoming gay or lesbian but not bisexual (e.g., Willow in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or the characters in the film *Brokeback Mountain*). In both examples, each of the characters has had long-term heterosexual relationships, but these are acknowledged as transitional relationships in a move towards homosexuality (Barker & Langdridge, 2008). Another example can be found among male US politicians who are in heterosexual marriages and have been found to be engaging in homosexual affairs. The reporting in the media will describe the individuals as ‘gay’ married politicians who have sexual relationships with men, and not as bisexuals (Barker & Langdridge, 2008).

Bisexual invisibility has also occurred within literature and film in South Africa. Stobie (2007), in her book *Somewhere in the Double Rainbow: Representations of Bisexuality in Post-Apartheid Novels*, examines representation of bisexuals in novels since the advent of democracy. She argues that in the first years of democracy, characters in novels were described as being bisexual but never overtly labelled as such. As democracy flourished, there have been examples of bisexuals being depicted in novels, but again in the context of sexual confusion or as a transition to homosexuality. Biographies of authors such as Beatrice Hastings and Leontine Sagan never discuss their sexuality, even though both authors engaged in sexual activities with both sexes (Stobie, 2004). Similarly, in South African films there is limited evidence of bisexuality. In films such as *Unmasking Africa* and *Everything Must Come To Light*, characters engaged in sexual activities with both sexes are viewed through the lens of homosexuality and

not bisexuality (Stobie 2004). A prominent example of invisibility was the case of Brenda Fassie. Fassie was a South African entertainer who engaged in relationships with both men and women. When journalists were reporting on her relationships, they would say she was either straight or lesbian. An article in the *Mail & Guardian* written by Matthew Krouse was titled ‘Brenda the Lesbian Icon’ (Stobie 2004, p. 39), even though Fassie claimed on numerous occasions to be bisexual (Stobie, 2004). This highlights how bisexual women’s sexual identity is erased and invisibilised, as it is positioned as lesbianism and not bisexuality. LGBTQI+ organizations have tried to address the invisibility and biphobia that face bisexual individuals, but funding is always a challenge and ‘crisis issues’ (i.e., research on lesbian killings, transphobia) are given priority in the allocation of resources; it is also the case that LGBTQI+ organizations are not supported or funded equally to other organizations in the social movement sector on the continent (Mwachiro, 2018).

2.7 Race, class and geographical spaces in relation to African sexualities

Some of the most critical factors that have influenced sexuality in South Africa are race and class. Apartheid was significant in this regard, as it relied for its implementation on laws enacted by the National Party government that discriminated against people of colour. Terreblanche (2002) argues that black individuals experienced the harshest forms of violence and discrimination since they were viewed as ‘less than’ all other races. black bodies were used as cheap labour in the economic sphere or were employed in taking care of white households. This created a view of the black body as an entity to be exploited, regulated and placed in service of others in order to maintain the apartheid system. During this time, the black female body experienced both physical violence (rape, beatings, etc.) and the psychological violence of

objectification. Comaroff and Comaroff (2008) argue that the black female body has had a long history of being violated for the benefit of others (through indigenous violence and colonialism), thus lacking subjectivity (as in the case of Sarah Baartman; see Matebeni, 2013). Scholars such as Gqola (2015) and Matebeni (2013) believe that this lack of subjectivity has influenced sexual relations, in which the black female body continues to be a body to be used for others' benefits and not for its own pleasure.

The implementation of apartheid had not only a racial element but also a geographical element. To ensure that racial segregation occurred in all spaces of society, the apartheid government enacted spatial segregation of different races (Christopher, 1995). Black, white, indian and coloured South Africans were either located in rural homelands (if they were classified as black) or, if they lived in urban areas, separated into different areas of cities. In these areas, social services and economic resources were limited to ensure that individuals worked in the cities for low wages, and black individuals never gained full 'citizenship' in urban areas and were only able to obtain such 'citizenship' in the homelands (Christopher, 1995). Historically, most LGBTQI+ organizations and social spaces (bars and clubs) were located in areas mainly occupied by white people. During the 1970s and 1980s, a homosexual subculture was prominent in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Even though homosexuality was present in other cities and rural areas, it was in these two cities that bars and bath houses for white gay men existed in discreet and hidden spaces (Cameron, 1994). Historically, black LGBTQI+ individuals in South Africa were not able to legally create or access public spaces in which to discuss or explore their concerns related to their sexual identities. Tucker (2009) argues that this geographical separation had an influence on individuals' sexual practices, as black and coloured LGBTQI+ individuals could not participate in those spaces, not only because of the geographical divide and their

restricted movement, but also because most of the discussions that took place there were centred on issues affecting white LGBTQI+ individuals. Hemmings (1997) argues that the fluid nature of bisexuality means that there are no clearly demarcated spaces for bisexuals, and therefore most bisexuals will occupy lesbian and gay spaces. Of course, this has changed over time as more of the bisexual spaces that exist online have grown into physical spaces, and there are more queer spaces that allow for all non-heterosexuals to be in a space together (Maliepaard, 2020). The queer spaces are not focused on fixed sexualities, and this allows for bisexuals to be in community with other queer individuals.

The influence of apartheid-era spatial segregation has been enduring. Even though democracy has allowed for the movement of racial groups into different areas, most racial groups still live in historically demarcated spaces (Tucker, 2009). LGBTQI+ social spaces are still racially separated, as middle- and upper-class LGBTQI+ bars and clubs are located mainly in suburbs or in city centres (Canham, 2017; Tucker, 2009). These spaces continue to be white dominated, with a few people of colour being a part of them because of their class position. In looking at different cities around South Africa, Bagnol et al. (2010) and Matebeni (2011) show how class has allowed for LGBT+ individuals of colour to occupy spaces that would not have been accessible to them previously. Even though class privilege has allowed for the movement of some LGBTQI+ individuals into these spaces, the movement of openly LGBTQI+ individuals of colour is still a challenge. Research has looked at how queer women have occupied public space in South Africa and an example of this is Gevisser (2010) who looked at white lesbian women and how they occupy space in the city of Bloemfontein. Gevisser argues that lesbian women face the challenge of patriarchy that exists in gay social spaces which makes it difficult for them to socialise and they then move towards the private space in groups to socialise with each other.

The patriarchy exists in gay spaces, and this has historically made it difficult for queer women to occupy public space (Gevisser, 2010). What is important to note here is that firstly the focus is on lesbian women and how they occupy space instead of gay men and secondly that the research moved outside of the major cities of Johannesburg and Cape Town when looking at LGBTQI+ studies and space. Gevisser continues this work by looking at the small town of Stellenbosch (located around 50km from Cape Town) and how it is highly influenced by the city of Cape Town and its LGBTQI+ culture in parts of the city (Gevisser, 2023). Gevisser shows how gay individuals are able to occupy space in Stellenbosch by not necessarily having gay clubs or bars but by occupying and expressing their sexuality in public spaces that they would not have been able to before such as pubs or clubs where you would mainly find heterosexuals in the space. This does not look exactly like the big city of Cape Town, but the influence of how LGBTQI+ individuals claim space in the major city is felt in the small town (Gevisser, 2023). This indicates how LGBTQI+ individuals occupy public spaces in different ways depending on where they are located.

Maliepaard (2015) argues that when researching spaces, one must consider how the language, class, practices and experiences of sexual minorities influence their ability to express themselves in social spaces. Social spaces that are occupied mainly by white LGBTQI+ individuals still do not consider these factors, and this makes individuals of colour sometimes unwilling to engage in these spaces (Tucker, 2009). This is illustrated in the book *Beyond the Mountain*, edited by Camminga and Matebeni (2021), who look at the city of Cape Town and its claim that it is the 'Queer Capital of Africa'. In the introduction to the book, Matebeni argues that Cape Town is a white, predominately gay city, which means that other sexualities, genders and non-genders struggle to exist in the city in the same way as white queers do (Matebeni, 2021). A form of

whitewashing¹¹ of the LGBTQI+ community occurs in the city that makes it appear to be friendly to all homosexuals, but race and class marginalization persist.

Black and coloured LGBTQI+ individuals must carve out their own spaces to be able to fully express themselves without judgement. These spaces have made it possible for them to shape their sexual identity (Tucker, 2009). Livermon (2014) argues that in some of these spaces, class and gender differences between LGBTQI+ individuals come to the fore. This occurs through the types of clothing individuals wear, and through expressions of gender that may be deemed ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’. Even though this stratification occurs in many of these spaces, it is in black queer spaces that it is challenged, as individuals in these spaces are more concerned with being safe and being able to find connection and build community with each other than with the differences between them. For black queer individuals in South Africa, performance in public spaces is important, as it demonstrates their ability to claim their sexuality that was denied to them historically. More spaces are being created for black queers to be able to express their sexuality, but this still comes with challenges, as is evident from the high levels of killings of black lesbians, mainly in their own communities. Livermon (2012) claims that black lesbians have had to undertake ‘cultural labour’ in these communities in order to survive and feel safe to express themselves. This labour occurs through lesbians engaging in the community they live in and adhering to certain norms and ideas of that community to avoid being viewed as a threat. The result of their presence and engagement in their communities has been a challenge to the hierarchies and binaries of race, sex and gender that, I believe, offers us a glimpse into the reimagining of how we understand sexualities and gender. This will be discussed in more detail

¹¹ ‘Whitewashing’ is a form of multiple actions that are used to cover-up or conceal other forms of ideas or identities that exist within a particular context usually along the lines of race (Byrd, 2016). For this thesis the term will mean a glossing over of black LGBTQI+ individuals who exist and occupy space in the city but are not acknowledged in the same way as their white counterparts.

in Chapter 6, which looks at how my interlocutors occupy public and private space as bisexual women, and how queer spaces have become more inclusive in challenging the multiple forms of oppression that exist.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the big discussions that inform how bisexuality is understood. The way in which sex and gender are constructed in a hierarchical and binary manner still influences how we understand sexuality. Combined with this is the heteronormativity that occurs in society, and how this marginalizes individuals who are not heterosexual. Lesbian women have objected to this unequal structure, and through it they have built a political identity that strives to dismantle all forms of oppression that affect women in relation to their sexuality. This perspective stems from the Global North, and scholars from the Global South have critiqued it and argued that local contexts must be considered when we try to understand sexualities, as other factors such as caste, race and class must be considered when we look at sexuality. For this thesis it is important to present evidence of how queer individuals have existed on the African continent, and how they have been able to occupy space both publicly and privately in ways that are not recognized within Global North perspectives. I believe that all of these factors have influenced how bisexuality has been understood, but this thesis also shows how bisexual women construct and experience their own sexuality. The data presented in the thesis thus contribute to a broader understanding of queer sexualities on the African continent and of how women express their sexuality in South Africa.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Following on from the previous chapter, which looked at the ideas and theories that informed this study, this chapter will look at the methodological approach that I used in my research. I wanted to understand how bisexual women construct and live their sexual identity in a Global South context, in the city of Johannesburg. When addressing this research question, it was critical for me to make bisexual women visible and their experiences, as I wanted to show how they came to understand themselves as bisexuals. I knew that to do this I would have to have conversations that involved their childhood and early stages of sexual attraction, and of course the role of their families and other important individuals in how much agency they had with regard to their sexuality, at home and in other spaces. Moving forward to their current life stages, I wanted to look at how their race, age, space, religion and class informed and continues to influence how they express and identify as bisexual women. Of course, there were other factors that my participants mentioned in how they came into their sexuality (e.g. influence of media) but for this research these themes were dominant and came to the fore in the different interviews I had. Lastly, I considered the relationship status of my respondents, because I wanted to find out if they have disclosed their sexuality to their current or past partners, and what the response to this has been by all parties involved. For me, all these factors were important, as I wanted to see if and how each of them influenced my respondents' sexuality in the course of their lifetime.

The city of Johannesburg was also important in the study. Firstly, it was easier for me to involve participants living in the same city where I reside. The city itself is a city historically was made up of migrants coming from all parts of the continent and abroad looking for economic

opportunities. From that different communities, different forms of dwelling and a history has been created in the city. This of course still continues to this day and as an urban city and economic hub on the continent, Johannesburg allows for people to come in and out of the city in a way without having to build community if they do not want to for their economic benefit (Falkof & Van Staden, 2020) . This allows for anonymity to occur for Johannesburg dwellers and this is I believe is important for LGBTQI+ individuals as they can claim and express their sexuality in the city in ways they could not in small towns or in other countries on the continent where being non-heterosexual is not approved of or illegal. It must be noted that this does not mean that LGBTQI+ spaces are not created in these restrictive spaces, but there is a way in which Johannesburg allows for freedom and anonymity as a big metropolis which other spaces cannot as Camminga notes ‘The map of Johannesburg, much like the city’s residents, is ever moving. Its clear limits are indiscernible except by those making the definitions- and the same can be said for the definition of who does and does not belong’(Camminga, 2020: 214). Lastly, the city continues to be important as it has a significant place in the history of LGBTQI+ movements in South Africa, and in the democratic dispensation (Cameron, 1994). As mentioned in the introduction, the first Pride march was held in Johannesburg on the 13th of October 1990 (Cameron, 1994). This was the first LGBTQI+ march to be held on the continent signifying the significant role that Johannesburg played in the fight for equal rights for queer individuals in the country and the continent as whole. Johannesburg continues to be one of the few cities in the country, and even on the African continent, where LGBTQI+ individuals can openly express their sexuality in public, even though they face challenges; these will be discussed in Chapter 5, where I consider the different spaces in which my participants engaged across the city. Another city in South Africa that is viewed as LGBTQI+ -friendly is Cape Town, but it has been critiqued

as being ‘white middle-class LGBTQI+ friendly’, as those who do not identify with white and middle-class identities experience marginalization there (Tucker, 2009). Johannesburg is considered to be LGBTQI+-friendly, but also allows for those of different races and classes to socialize with each other, which for me was an interesting dimension to explore. An aspect of the study is investigation of how the bisexual women I interviewed engaged with space, why they chose to engage in particular spaces, and what this can tell us about how non-heterosexual women occupy public space in a country with high levels of gender-based violence (GBV) against women. I wanted to understand where they gathered around the city of Johannesburg and what informed their reasoning of selecting certain neighbourhoods in Johannesburg in relation to their sexuality. I also wanted to see who was allowed into these spaces that non-heterosexual women occupy and who was not for various reasons. In my own experience growing up in the city being a bisexual woman I found that spaces for non-heterosexual women were limited which made it difficult for me to build community with other non-heterosexual women. This of course has changed in the city as more non-heterosexual women have occupied both public and private spaces and I wanted to understand how this has affected my respondents. Lastly, I wanted to know the motivation for coming together as queer women. I was keen to learn why these women gathered in different spaces and how this has informed how they express and perform their sexuality.

With the above context in mind, I decided to use a qualitative approach in gathering my data. In looking at past LGBTQI+ studies and dissertations, I found that authors used both qualitative and quantitative methods, but they engaged primarily with qualitative methodologies for this type of research. Qualitative research seeks to examine or enquire about social phenomena in their natural settings (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). It seeks to find answers to the questions of why

certain social phenomena occur, and what we can learn from them, instead of focusing on ‘how many’ or ‘how much’ research questions. Qualitative research tries to document the experiences and behaviours of individuals or groups, and how these shape relationships in society (Creswell & Poth, 2016). I wanted to document the experiences of my participants in terms of how they understand, perform and express their bisexuality in an intersectional manner, involving other factors such as race, class, space, religion and age.

In this chapter I explain the methodological approach I selected and the reasoning behind it. I describe the methods I used to gather the data for the study over a period of time. I also discuss how I took into consideration the ethics involved in the study, and how this impacted on me, not only as a scholar but also as a human being. Finally, I will discuss the challenges I encountered in the data collection process and how I addressed them.

3.2 Life histories

When I decided to do this research, I knew that I would be discussing something that is very personal to people and therefore needs to be approached with sensitivity. A specific data collection method is required to understand the interpersonal nature of identity construction, and how individuals come to express their multiple identities. With that in mind, I decided to use a life history approach to gather my data from my interlocutors. Plummer (1995) defines life history research as a full account of an individual’s life, given in their own words. A life history approach gathers data over a period of time spent with the participant during recorded interviews, observation of the individual’s life, and interviews with friends or other family members if necessary (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The idea behind this approach is that it relies heavily on individuals’ subjective realities; so, the focus is not on objective facts and the

accuracy of people's stories, but instead on how individuals ascribe meaning to life events. From these meanings, we can proceed to formulate substantive theories based on interpretation of reality, rather than on scientific explanation (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984).

For me it was especially important to get a full picture of the history of each of my participants, especially when it came to understanding how they constructed their sexuality. I knew that I had to start in their childhood and find out what their initial ideas or experiences were, with respect to their sexual identity and in relation to sex. In developing my questionnaire, what was important in the initial questions was asking participants about their early experiences of realising their non-normative sexuality, as this provided me with a pathway to understand how they came into their sexuality depending on their experiences. For most of my participants this understanding occurred in their childhood, but for some it happened later in their lives. This question was further elaborated on when I asked participants about their initial feelings about their desires, whether they had decided to disclose their sexuality to their family members, and what the response was to this. For me, this early discovery of their sexuality was important, as I wanted to understand how they ascribed meaning to their sexuality at a young age, as well as later in life, and how this was influenced by their family, friends, media, popular culture and other agents that shaped them. A history of this early period in their lives helped me to understand how my participants had come to their sexuality as adults, and how this was informed by their first romantic and sexual experiences.

As mentioned earlier, an individual's sexuality is very personal, so I knew I had to be sensitive to my respondents in how I conducted the interviews. I needed to make them as comfortable as possible, and one of the ways I did that was by disclosing my own bisexuality. I felt that it was important that my respondents were aware of my sexuality, so that they could possibly relate to

me and know that I have my own vested interest in this research work of trying to contribute to making bisexuality visible as a legitimate identity, and one that we as bisexuals should claim more often. To help my participants feel comfortable with the interviewing process, I asked them to decide where and how they wanted to conduct the interview (i.e., online or face-to-face). Since I am studying a personal issue in this research, I knew that I had to pay special attention to the body language, tone of voice and certain expressions exhibited by respondents during the interviews (Ganguly, 2017). This was important for me, as it communicated what my participants would not say in words, and then I could follow up a response they made with a question about any physical expressions I observed. All of this helped me to build trust and encourage my participants to share their experiences with me.

Using a life history approach was also important in my selection of women, or gender-non-conforming individuals who have historically been marginalized subjects, as my respondents. Feminist researchers have argued that this approach is useful for groups of people who have been excluded from research, as it allows them to document their experiences in their own voices (Goodson, 2001), and for ‘rich evidence about impersonal and collective processes as well as about subjectivity’ (Connell, 1987, p. 89). Subjectivity was important in the research, as I wanted to understand how my respondents viewed their sexuality, and how it intersects with other identities of class, race and age. I will delve more deeply into my selection of women for the research in the sampling section of this chapter.

3.3 Interviews

Interviews are the most common methods used in a qualitative approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). When discussing sexuality, I knew that I had to use interviews to gather the data I needed

for the study. I drafted an interview schedule to guide me, but I was also aware that I needed to be flexible and allow for the interview process to be iterative and go where it needed to while still gathering the necessary data. This is in line with an interview model that Kvale (1996) argues for; the interviewer must allow for the interview process to go in different directions while still having specific questions to pose, so that the participant is able to tell their story in their own words. I began the process of collecting my data in late 2019 and completed it at the end of 2021. I conducted my interviews wherever my participants felt comfortable, and initially they were able to have face-to-face interviews with me across the city. Once the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020, I was forced to move some of my interviews online. Initially I did not want to do this, because I knew that the research topic was sensitive and required me to conduct interviews face-to-face. With some apprehension, and not being sure when the pandemic would allow for in-person conversations, I decided on moving to online interviews. Overall, I conducted two interviews with each participant, and with five of my participants I conducted an additional interview. In the second or third interviews, I was trying to delve more deeply into some of their responses for which I wanted more clarification.

The drafting of my interview schedule was important to the interview process. I started the schedule by asking very simple biographical questions such as what race and gender participants identified with, whether or not they were employed, and what profession they were in. I did this in order to collect the necessary data as well as to begin the interview with simple questions that would allow my participants to feel comfortable, before turning to more personal questions that might make them a bit uncomfortable depending on how they responded. An example of a personal question was: ‘Have you experienced any form of harassment or violence because of your bisexuality?’ This question came later in the interview, and for some of my participants it

was a difficult question to answer as they had, in fact, experienced some form of violence, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. I knew that I had to pay attention when my participants responded to this question, and I also allowed the conversation to delve more deeply into their experiences of sexual violence and harassment if they allowed me to do so. Having the questions build up slowly was important, as this made my participants feel more comfortable and willing to share some of their personal experiences.

Before any interview, I had an initial discussion with the participant concerned about what some of the questions were that they would be asked during the process. For me, this initial conversation was important, in that I wanted to create a relaxed and informal connection with my participants before we moved into the more formal space of the interview. As a bisexual woman conducting research on other bisexual women, I acknowledged that a high-level of reflexivity and transparency was required. This commonality, and other similarities that I shared with participants, such as being a University of the Witwatersrand graduate or spending a significant amount of time in my youth in the township of Soweto, could serve to build rapport, enhance their sense of trust in me, and create a more open research situation (Jones, 2005). I had this conversation on our cellphones, and it was here that I disclosed my own bisexuality to each of my participants and informed them of the research, explaining why I was doing it and giving them examples of questions I would ask. It must be noted that when I informed my participants that the reason I had chosen this topic was to try to visibilise bisexuality, a lot of them responded with both enthusiasm and frustration, commenting on the lack of visibility of bisexuality in LGBTQI+ spaces, and how this had impacted on them and on their own sexuality. This positive response facilitated my respondents' willingness to be open during the interview process, since they wanted to share with me their experiences of being bisexual women.

The shift to online interviews because of Covid-19 was challenging for me at first. I was not able to sit face-to-face with my respondents, and this was a key part of how I wanted to conduct my interviews because of the topic. I wanted to wait until 2021 to speak with my participants, but after much discussion with my supervisor I decided to try out a few of my interviews online. Ten of my participants had their interviews online, and thirteen had interviews face-to-face. Overall, most of the interviews went well online, but I still had difficulties such as cellphone data access for my participants and seeing them online without interruptions caused by network connectivity problems. Some of my participants did not have enough cellphone data for an online conversation lasting one or two hours, and I therefore had to give them money to buy data for the interview. Another challenge was that some of my participants did not want to use the video option during the interview, because it would use too much data. This made it difficult for me to observe their body or facial expressions. The way I dealt with this challenge was to listen very carefully and try to recognize if there was a change of tone in their voices or in the answers they gave. This allowed me to probe further where necessary, even if I was unable to see them. For my participants whom I did not see online this did work, but I also think what was very helpful was that they wanted to talk because of the isolation they were experiencing during the Covid-19 pandemic, and so it was not too difficult to get them to fully express their feelings to me.

I was able to have at least two interviews with each of my respondents. The first interview was structured and focused on the questions. The second interview was more informal, as I knew my interlocutors and we went out to lunch, where I could have a follow-up discussion with them. I had to have a second interview to probe further into some of the questions I had asked in the first interview. All of my participants were more than willing to have a second interview, and I was able to delve more deeply into their first responses and gain more insight into their

experiences.

In addition to interviews with my respondents, I also had informal conversations and informal interviews with lesbian women. Some of them were people I knew, and others were not. I made this decision as, in my own experience, and in discussion with others, I have found that some lesbian women have strong opinions and views about bisexual women. Some of these opinions are informed by experiences they have had, and others are not. I found that in my initial interviews with bisexual women, they vocalized their own experiences with lesbian women, and how these had been relationships filled with tension. I decided to have conversations with some lesbian women to learn about their opinions of bisexual women, and why they have seemingly negative attitudes towards these women. I did not use the same interview schedule for these interviews; rather, based on my interviews with my participants, I was able to formulate some informal questions that I wanted to ask to get a fuller picture and understanding of the relationships internal to the LGBTQI+ community in Johannesburg. For this study I felt it was necessary to interview lesbian women as will be seen in the analysis chapters where I look at the biphobia that my participants experienced from other lesbian women and what that says about how women's sexuality is not only regulated by the heteropatriarchy but by other queer women. Lesbian women were not at the centre of the research rather a small piece in the puzzle.

Most of the interviews were conducted in English, but some of them were in isiZulu or Sesotho. This was done with those black South African respondents who felt more comfortable saying certain things in an African language instead of English. I also felt that there were some moments when my participants could not express what they wanted to say in English, and so I would start speaking in an African language to signal that they could continue to respond to a question and express how they felt in the language they felt most comfortable in. This came to

the fore when I was speaking about sexual violence and harassment; my participants would use certain words in an African language to express their anger or sadness about these experiences.

The interview process was my favourite part of the research. It enabled me to collect the stories of my interlocutors and understand how they came to understand their sexuality. It was also important as it was about understanding not only their sexuality, but also how other parts of their identity intersected with their sexuality and how that informed who they were as full individuals, living in the city of Johannesburg.

3.4 Participant observation

Another method that I used in my data collection was a form of participant observation. This method allows a researcher to witness participants in their ‘natural’ setting, in terms of where they spend time together socially with others, rather than in a ‘forced’ setting such as a workshop or interview (Lichterman, 2002). I wanted to be able to observe some of my participants and how they expressed or discussed their bisexuality in their social settings, without them feeling any pressure to answer questions in a particular manner for my research. Of course, my participants were aware of who I was and the research I was doing, so my presence was not a complete submersion in their worlds (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998), but I was still able to watch them without the pressure of the study being present. Participant observation allows the researcher to take note of the nuances and the unconscious behaviour that respondents display without their knowledge, which can inform the research (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998). This method allowed me to pay attention to other forms of communication that could inform my participants’ behaviour, and ultimately the research. One of the ways I conducted this observation was by joining the bisexual group AmBi. AmBi is a global social club that is ‘a community for bi

people, our partners, and allies' to come together and build a community of individuals who affirm their bisexuality (AmBi n.d.). The idea behind the group is to have bisexuals come together and feel pride in being bisexual, and also share their experiences with other bisexual individuals or allies who support this form of sexuality. This is important, as bisexual individuals have experienced biphobia from both heterosexual and homosexual individuals (Barker & Langdrige, 2008; see also Chapter 7 of this thesis), and this space offers them an opportunity to move away from the biphobia and create positive experiences for themselves as bisexual individuals. I joined the Johannesburg chapter of AmBi in 2019, and over the period of 2019 to 2021 I attended the various social events that the chapter hosted, such as visits to art galleries, picnics in the park, or drinks in bars around Johannesburg. It was in this space that I was able to observe two of my participants in a setting of their choosing, noting how they expressed their sexuality in relation to others, especially other bisexual individuals.

Another space in which I observed some of my participants was at gatherings with other friends for dinners, or at bars where I was able to watch them with their friends in different social settings. The last space where I was able to observe my respondents was at various social gatherings I attended around Johannesburg that are hosted for LGBTQI+ individuals, in clubs or art galleries as will be discussed in Chapter 6, where I consider how space affects my participants' ability to perform and feel safe in their sexuality. I was fortunate to be able to attend clubs in the suburb of Illovo, and parties such as the *Pussy Party* in the CBD and in Braamfontein, where I was able to observe my participants and how they interacted with their friends and with other people.

It must be noted that I was not able to observe all my respondents in these informal settings, but I did observe ten of them. In all the above settings, my goal was to obtain a better understanding of

my respondents as individuals, especially in relation to their sexuality, and how this came to the fore, or did not, in different spaces for different reasons.

3.5 Sampling

The criteria for selection of my research participants were intentional. I wanted my participants to be 18 years old and over, so that I would not need any parental consent. My participants had to identify as bisexual, and they had to be women or gender-non-binary individuals who are viewed as women in society because of their physical appearance. My participants also had to be living in Johannesburg during the period of the study, so that they could draw from their own experience of what it means to be a bisexual woman living in Johannesburg and how the city has influenced this. I wanted to interview women from different classes and races, as I wanted to see if there were any variances in their responses because of these two factors. Lastly, I also wanted to look at the religion of my participants and how this has influenced their sexual identity.

In order to find participants for my research I had to use multiple sources. Initially I thought it was going to be easy to find participants, but in fact it was a challenge to do so. One of the reasons for this was that many bisexual women are not publicly open about their sexuality, partly because of the biphobia that they experience from some individuals in both the heterosexual and LGBTQI+ communities (Klesse, 2011). I therefore had to be creative in finding respondents.

One of the first methods I used to sample my participants was the snowball method. Snowballing allows the researcher to find participants through other research participants by using their social networks (friends, family, workplaces, organizations, etc.) (Noy, 2008). This type of sampling allows access to participants who may suffer from stigma, prejudice or marginalization and who may therefore not be easily accessible. For me, this method was important as I used the networks

of my friends and colleagues to obtain my first sample of participants. These respondents were at first nervous about participating in my research, but once I explained the nature of the research and the reasons why I wanted to do it, I was able to convince them to be a part of the study. I also contacted LGBTQI+ organizations operating and organizing around Johannesburg (the Forum for the Empowerment of Women [FEW] and Iranti¹²). I informed them of my research and my search for participants. These organizations were helpful, and through them I was able to gain more respondents. As mentioned earlier, I also joined the AmBi community so that I could be able to recruit participants and observe them in social situations.

After some time, this form of snowballing reached its limit, and then I had to find new ways of selecting respondents. Social media is a powerful tool for research, as it allows for questions to be asked in a less formal atmosphere and for marginalized groups to be able to discuss issues in an open public format (Kirkup, 2010). I used multiple forms of social media to gain participants. One platform that I used was Twitter, which is used by many LGBTQI+ individuals who raise awareness about or have discussions on issues that are affecting their community. I knew that I would get participants through this platform, and I drafted a flyer detailing the research, who I was, and my contact details to be used by those who chose to participate in the study. I posted the flyer using a friend's Twitter handle, because they are a well-known writer and editor, specifically in queer and feminist spaces. A significant number of participants responded to this online post, and many of them were eager to be a part of the study. I was able to gain more than 20 participants from this online sampling method; I decided to only interview 12 respondents from this sample so that I could be able to have deeper and multiple conversations with them,

¹² The Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) is a black lesbian feminist non-profit organization based in Johannesburg working on advocacy and capacity-building. Iranti is a Johannesburg-based media advocacy organization that advocates for the rights of LGBTI+ persons, with a specific focus on lesbian, transgender (including gender-non-conforming) and intersex persons in Africa.

instead of once-off conversations that would have been necessary if I had interviewed all those who responded. The last social media tool I used was Facebook. I have a Facebook profile, and I posted the same flyer there as I had used on Twitter. This led to more participants wanting to be part of the study. It is interesting to note that on Facebook I received responses from bisexual men who wanted to be a part of the study, because they recognized its importance and wanted to share their experiences as bisexual men. Unfortunately, I had to inform them that bisexual men did not fit my selection criteria for participants, but I did have informal conversations with them online and face-to-face. I found this to be extremely informative, as through these conversations I was able to obtain a different perspective on bisexuality. On reflection, I recognize the importance of looking at bisexuality for men, women and gender-non-conforming individuals as a whole, and not just for cisgendered women. The perspective of bisexual men informed my thesis when I looked at the biphobia experienced by bisexuals, and how it occurs differently for men and women.

In total I had twenty-four participants for my research study (see Table 1). I decided to stop at this number, as this would provide me with enough data to be able to explore the experience of what it means to be a bisexual woman living in Johannesburg. Twenty-three of my participants were cisgendered women, and one individual was non-binary. I wanted a pool of participants from multiple classes, but unfortunately, I was not able to find participants from different social classes, as only people from middle- and upper-class backgrounds wanted to be a part of my research. A possible reason for this is that the snowballing method I used to find participants meant that I interviewed mainly middle-class participants just like me. The definition of the middle class in South Africa has been challenging, because of the historical legacy of apartheid. Since 1994, and through the deliberate efforts of the ruling African National Congress Party

(ANC) via its economic policies, a black middle class has emerged in South Africa (Southall, 2019). This middle class is characterized by individuals who have some form of tertiary education and occupy professional positions in either middle or senior management (Southall, 2019). However, even though they are classified as middle class, they can still be economically precarious. This is so both because of the historical economic legacy of apartheid in South Africa, and also because of the current neoliberal political economy system, in which there is major youth unemployment. Secondly, I wanted to understand how queerness and being middle class informed each other in a South African context as there has been limited research looking at these two factors together.¹³

¹³ LGBTQI+ research historically has focused on individuals in the townships of South Africa and how they negotiate how to express their sexuality (Lane et al., 2008; Livermon, 2014; Salo et al., 2010). This group is usually working class or living in townships across the country.

Table 1: List of research participants

Pseudonym	Age	Race	Profession	Religious affiliation	Relationship status
Kopano	27	Black	Spiritual healer	Christian	In a relationship
Samantha	58	White	Lecturer	Jewish	In a relationship
Lisa	34	White	Lecturer	None	Single
Kefilwe (non-conforming)	26	Black	Teacher	Atheist	In a relationship
Nabeelah	25	Black	Intern journalist	Muslim	Single
Karabo	22	Black	Student	None	Single
Robyn	28	White	Consultant	Christian	In a relationship
Babalwa	24	Black	Debating coach	Christian	In a relationship
Dineo	22	Black	Student	None	Single
Ayanda	25	Black	Journalist	None	In a relationship
Lindiwe	21	Black Asian	Student	Muslim	Single
Sheila	29	Black	Freelance editor	None	Single
Nomvula	21	Black	Student	None	Single
Zinzi	29	Black	Consultant	None	Single
Lauren	45	Coloured	Graphic designer	None	In a relationship
Jennifer	33	White	Video journalist	Christian	Single
Amanda	24	Black	Self-employed	None	Single
Lerato	21	Black	Student	Christian	In a relationship
Pumla	26	Black	Lawyer	Christian	Single
Mpho	35	Black	Medical doctor	Jehovah's Witness	Single
Brooke	35	White	Development specialist	None	Single
Vuyo	24	Black	Student	Christian	Single

Tshepiso	27	Black	Lecturer/PhD student	None	In a relationship
Beth	28	White	Tattoo artist	None	In a relationship

My sample is primarily black individuals in their twenties and thirties. I was very fortunate to find individuals outside of this age group such as Lauren (45) and Samantha (58); I was able to include them in my study by sampling them via social media (Facebook) and my friend's network, respectively. Both white women were keen to participate in the research, and I appreciated their perspectives, which added to my understanding of how age became a critical factor in how my participants understood their sexuality. This was informed by the fact that my participants grew up in different time periods in South Africa; my white participants were able to claim their sexuality in public more than was possible for other races, who historically and currently still find this to be a challenge. I say this because the transition to democracy in 1994, and the inclusion of LGBTQI+ rights in the Constitution, shaped how my respondents were able to express their sexuality at different points in their lives.

As seen from the column on 'Profession' in Table 1, most of my interlocutors are middle-class individuals who have some form of tertiary education or are currently engaged in studies at this level or are professionals in the workplace. These individuals therefore represent a specific class of bisexual individuals.

I wanted to know the relationship status of my participants because I believed that this would inform their responses, particularly when it came to disclosure of their sexuality to their partners and others, and what that means for how they express their bisexuality to others. I also wanted to know, if they were in a relationship, what type of relationship it was, i.e. an 'opposite-sex' or

‘same-sex’ relationship. This was critical to knowing how they were able to express and perform their bisexuality in heterosexual or homosexual relationships. Lastly, when I asked my participants what religion they identified with, most of them responded with ‘none’. I use the word ‘none’ in this case because when I asked my respondents if they were atheists they said no, they preferred to say they had no religious affiliation, but they did identify with some form of spirituality. I believe that this is because all of my participants were raised in religious households, and even though they no longer affiliate to a religion, it still influences them today. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4, where my participants detail how religion had an influence on their sexuality at an early age and how it continues to do so today. All these dimensions show how diverse my sample was, and the intersectional nature of an individual’s sexual identity.

3.6 Ethics and safety

To ensure that participants were not put at any risk by my research, I took various measures. The first measure I took to avoid risk and protect them was to have their names anonymised by making use of pseudonyms instead of their real names, as seen in Table 1. Secondly, the information I obtained from them was treated as confidential, and only my transcriber and I had access to the data gathered. Elwood and Martin (2000) argue that the selection of interview location by my participants in research is critical, as it allows my participants to be comfortable and share their stories but also informs the researcher of the social spaces that my participants are at ease in, especially when discussing issues that may be private or sensitive (e.g., sexual violence and harassment). I allowed my participants to decide on the venue where they wanted to conduct the interview, if it was face-to-face. Most of these interviews were conducted either at

the participant's residence or in a corner of a quiet coffee shop or restaurant with few other people present. For my online participants the venue had already been selected (i.e. Google Meets or Zoom), but I did observe that some of my participants were sensitive about where they would have the discussion online, as they were aware of the sensitivity of the topic, and they wanted to have the interview in a quiet space by themselves which would either be in another room in their homes, their cars or private office rooms.

As a researcher I am always aware of the power relations that exist in any study. Since I was extracting information from participants for my own benefit, I was constantly thinking of how I could acknowledge this unequal relation and try to address it where I could. One of the ways in which I did this was, as mentioned earlier, by disclosing my bisexuality to all my participants to build a commonality amongst us. I also allowed my participants to ask me any questions they wanted to, before and during the interview. For me this was important, as it allowed them to feel more comfortable during the entire process and to know that I was grappling with some of the questions I was asking them. Lastly, I made my participants aware that they could ask for their respective interview transcriptions if they wanted them, and that the completed thesis would be made available to them if they requested this. Participants were further informed of their freedom to withdraw their participation at any point of the interview and the study. Fortunately, none of my participants withdrew from the research.

Qualitative research often involves invading someone's privacy and asking personal questions that participants may not be comfortable answering (Dowling, 2005). Using life histories as a methodology allows for the re-opening of old traumas (Miller, 2000). This was something I took seriously, because I knew that some of my questions looked at sexual violence and harassment. I knew that some of my participants might have experienced sexual violence or physical

harassment and that this might open old traumas for them. I was able to contend with the possibility of this matter coming up in each interview by ensuring on my consent form that my participants were aware of the section covering this topic in the interview schedule, and that if they experienced any discomfort or were ‘triggered’ during or after the interview they could contact various social support service hotlines (such as the South African Depression and Anxiety Group or counselling services at People Opposing Women Abuse). None of my participants who had experienced violence discontinued the interviews during the process, and I made sure to follow up with them a few weeks after the interviews to check whether they were okay. I was academically prepared for my participants to have possibly experienced sexual violence or harassment, as I had previously done research on women who experience violence (Bashonga & Khuzwayo, 2017). Previously I had participated in a sexual harassment workshop training titled ‘Defence for Life Campaign’ hosted by the South African Commercial, Catering Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) a few years ago, where I was trained on how to support individuals who had experienced harassment or violence in their lives. In this training I learnt how to listen and support individuals if they ever came to me and informed me of their experiences of violence. Therefore, I knew how to conduct myself appropriately. At no point during the interviews did I pressure my participants to share such experiences, and I respected them when they chose not to do so. All of this influenced me emotionally, and I made sure to space out my interviews so that I could journal and see a therapist, when necessary, to be able to continue with the study.

The University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee approved my research. I have followed ethical guidelines both in the collection of data and in the way in which I have written up the thesis.

3.7 Challenges

During the process of undertaking this study I experienced some challenges. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, finding participants for the study was a challenge, and I had to deploy numerous methods in order to get respondents (social networks, social media and contacting NGOs). This meant that my fieldwork took longer than I had expected, as I did not have an immediate sample of bisexual women willing to participate. In regard to the NGOs I contacted, I thought I would be able to get participants but even the employees at the organizations commented on how they did not have that many bisexual women coming through their doors, but rather other queer women. I was fortunate enough to visit the Gay and Lesbian Archive¹⁴ located at the University of the Witwatersrand, and in their archives, I found a lot of material looking at bisexual individuals in South Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s. During this period there was a strong bisexual community within LGBTQI+ spaces, as articles were published, and discussions and workshops were held where issues affecting bisexuals were discussed. Over time this space has declined, for numerous reasons. One of these reasons is because bisexuality and its fluid nature are expressed by individuals in different ways, and some individuals do not want to disclose their sexuality. Another reason is that there has been a decline in documentation of bisexuals in South Africa, something I will discuss in the chapters where I present my analysis.

Without doubt the most significant challenge to my research was Covid-19. The pandemic was a challenge not only for the study but also for me personally. I began the research in 2018 and in 2020 I was scheduled to do my interviews. As the pandemic began, and there was uncertainty about whether we would be able to go back to our previous ways of working, I first questioned

¹⁴ The Gay and Lesbian Archive is an NGO whose aim is the production, preservation and dissemination of information about the history, culture and contemporary experiences of LGBTQI+ people in South Africa (see <https://gala.co.za/about/history/>).

whether I would be able to continue with the PhD and conduct the interviews for my research. Fortunately, in consultation with my supervisor and with other scholars who were working on their own research, I decided to shift my interviews online. Online interviews are not new to qualitative research, as constraints such as finances, geographical locations and physical mobility have resulted in scholars conducting interviews online (Cater, 2011). However, my decision to shift some of the interviews online was not an easy one, because I felt it was important to make sure my participants were comfortable with this and still wanted to participate in the study. Before these interviews, I had never conducted research interviews online; fortunately, after two online interviews I could tell what I was doing wrong and learn from that. My participants responded positively to the online interviews; I believe one of the reasons for this is that the pandemic had forced individuals to stay indoors and avoid communicating with others, and when they had an opportunity to communicate with me, they were very open, wanting to share their experiences as they had been forced not to share anything with others during the first year of the pandemic. During some of these interviews I observed how much my participants not only wanted to discuss their experiences of their sexuality, but I found that they also wanted to discuss their experiences of COVID-19 and some of the feelings that they had. For me as a researcher this then forced me to bring forth not only my research skills to the interviews but also my compassion and empathy as another human being going through this difficult time. My own research beliefs require me to not only be a researcher but also be someone who is open to share myself and be a considerate listener during the interviews. I became very thoughtful about how I conducted my interviews. I began each interview by asking my participants ‘please can you pause and think for a few minutes how you are doing right now?’ I did this as a technique to ground my respondents in the space of the interview, and to allow them to share with me their

emotions if they chose to. After I asked this question, a significant amount of my participants did answer the question by telling me about the challenges that they were having during the pandemic. For me as a researcher I knew that I had to give space for my participants to express their feelings before I began my interview and we paused during the conversation in order to be present and try process our experiences together. I noticed that when my participants shared with me their feelings, they felt even more comfortable with me because I could relate to similar feelings of anxiety and mild depression. This was not the first time in my research experience where I have faced a challenge that required me to provide space and be aware of my interlocutor, but it was the first time where I had to consciously be aware of how my participant was doing before and during the interviews. In reflection I feel that I will be taking this approach going forward in future research as it has allowed me to build rapport with my respondents during and after the study.

The pandemic also affected the duration of my studies, as I had to extend my research by twelve months, which was not ideal. The unplanned and uncertain nature of the pandemic forced me to put my research on hold. At one stage I was not sure if, as a country and a planet, we would be able to go outside and continue with our 'usual lives'. Emotionally, Covid-19 was overwhelming for me. The uncertainty of what was going to happen, especially during the first six months of the pandemic, caused a lot of fear and anxiety, and this translated into me doubting whether I would complete the study. This led to me experiencing serious levels of despair and depression, which affected my research abilities. I believe that this feeling continues even now, as I still have moments when I question my capabilities to continue as a scholar outside this study and beyond it. What was incredibly helpful in combatting some of these feelings were some of the academic groups I was a part of. These groups were helpful in that other scholars were grappling with

some of the same pandemic-related challenges I was encountering. In these spaces I was able to gain insights into how I could continue with my studies, but also simply voice the anxiety we were all feeling. These spaces helped me significantly in continuing my studies and writing up this thesis.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have set out the methodological approach I decided upon, and the diversity of the sample obtained for this research. It was important for me to use tools that could show the lived experiences of bisexual women, using their own words, and the multiple social factors (race, age, class, location) that have influenced and shaped their bisexuality at different stages of their lives. It was also important for me to use tools that allowed for individuals who have been marginalized to come to the fore and document their experiences of how they express their sexuality publicly in South Africa.

Chapter 4: Discovering a Bisexual Identity

4.1 Introduction

It has been argued by Brown (2002b) that an individual's sexuality is critical for their self-development. This is informed, of course, by contexts that either affirm or deny the individual's sexuality. How an individual identifies will, in certain contexts, shape how they perform or express their sexual identity privately or publicly. This is especially important for queer individuals who do not conform to the heteronormative order; how they discover and ultimately describe their sexuality will always be challenging for them, depending on the context. In this chapter I argue that for my participants, the journey of discovering their bisexual identity is a unique, non-linear and challenging one.

Like all other LGBTQI+ individuals, when my participants explored or discovered their sexual identity, especially at a young age, they were faced with the negative responses of heteronormativity, race, and in certain contexts religion, in their disapproval of this sexual identity. For bisexual individuals there is an added layer of negativity, because as mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 2, the invisibility of bisexuality has resulted in people not knowing or properly understanding what bisexuality is. Because of that, stigma and biphobia occur in both queer and non-queer spaces.

All of this will be discussed in the present chapter, and I will consider how these factors have shaped the ways in which my interlocutors identify with their sexuality. I will look at how my participants discovered their bisexuality at different points in their lives, and the difficulties that have come with this discovery. For some of them this was a challenge, especially when they

were younger, and they navigated that difficulty in multiple ways. This navigation continues, as the questions of legitimacy and ‘passing’ are still posed to bisexual individuals, and the tensions that exist between bisexuality and other queer identities will be looked at. Finally, I will look at how my participants have chosen – if they have chosen – to disclose their sexual identity to their romantic partners, and at the divergent responses that they have received. I look at how these responses have influenced the ways in which they express or perform their bisexuality in the privacy of their romantic relationships. I believe all of this will highlight the importance of viewing sexuality as fluid, and of recognizing that bisexuality offers an opportunity to learn how queer sexualities are expressed in South Africa.

4.2 Early recognition of a queer identity

One of the most significant contributors to understanding identity development in the field of social psychology has been Erickson (1995), who argues that for an individual to be psychologically healthy, they need to have a consistent or unified identity in all aspects of their lives. This means that whether their gender, race, or sexual identity is concerned, an individual needs to be comfortable with the multiple identities that make up who they are, even if society or others are not. Psychology studies have argued that a positive sexual identity is critical for how individuals view themselves and how they will engage with others in society (Konik & Stewart, 2004). Psychology researchers Lapinski and McKirnan (2013) have taken this argument further and developed a Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) identity development model that queer individuals can use in claiming a queer sexual identity. The LGB process involves ‘identity formation and conflict’, ‘acceptance’ and ‘identity integration’. This process is not linear, and the model considers contextual factors that influence how an individual moves through the stages.

The first stage, identity formation and conflict, involves the initial discovery of a non-heterosexual identity by an individual, where in the beginning there is confusion, denial and exploration. Individuals are known to deny their sexual identity, and even if they are not in denial, there is a concealment of these initial attractions or sexual desires. The result of this in some instances is shame that they associate with themselves because of their sexual identity which only increases their reasons for hiding their attractions.

When I asked my participants when they had initially recognized that they might have a non-heterosexual identity, most of them replied that this occurred during their early childhood or adolescence, between the ages of 9 and 14 years. For most of them, the experiences that led to this recognition were either a crush on or an intimate moment with another individual of the same sex, such as a kiss or a hug. Karabo (22) mentioned one experience:

I remember in primary school I was probably 10 or 11, my friends and I would have sleepovers over the weekend and sometimes the girls would like each other and kiss each other... I remember it happened with me and I remember just really liking it even though I felt what we were doing was wrong, something still felt good about it.

Dineo (22) commented:

I used to walk home with a girlfriend we became friends and grew very close and I think maybe like a year or two later I developed feelings for her and I told her and we would kiss as we walked home in the bushes so no one would see us kissing and people would start to talk.

For both Dineo and Karabo, their initial experiences of same-sex attraction were both positive

and negative. In both cases they were recognizing their initial attractions to girls, but at the same time they highlight how they had to be secretive or feel bad about these attractions, which is a form of denial. I asked Karabo why she felt that what she was doing was wrong, and she replied:

I come from a household where I only saw men and women in romantic relationships. I remember watching Generations¹⁵ and only seeing a man and a woman in kissing and being in love. So, when I had these feelings, I just thought that it was wrong as it was not something I saw in terms of love.

The lack of visible LGBTQI+ individuals in society, or in Karabo's case on television, highlights the 'compulsory heterosexuality' that is influential in how individuals shape how they view romantic relationships. Rich (2003) and other scholars have argued that heteronormativity influences all spheres of society. Regarding romantic relationships, historically heterosexuality has been disseminated through films, books and television. This dissemination has had a significant influence on how individuals, especially LGBTQI+ individuals, understand romantic relationships. For LGBTQI+ individuals the message is that their sexual desires and attractions conflict with heterosexuality which is the dominant sexuality communicated and advocated for in most societies, even in South Africa. For Karabo, when she was younger and having sleepovers and kissing girls, she was historically socialized to believe that this attraction was 'not right' and that something was wrong; hence she did it in a safe but private space with her friends, who also wanted to kiss her. For Dineo, kissing in the bushes was also a way in which she could hide a same-sex attraction, because she did not want people to talk about her actions. For LGBTQI+ individuals, hiding or being secretive about their attractions or identities is nothing new, but for

¹⁵ *Generations* is a local South African soap opera that is broadcast on television by the national broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC).

this research what I found interesting is that both Karabo and Dineo were two young women born in post-apartheid South Africa who still, in their early twenties, did not feel comfortable being visible about their same-sex attraction. This feeling occurred with other participants who were born after 1994, who also felt uncomfortable with being visible. This highlights how even though South Africa does have progressive laws on LGBTQI+, there are still numerous factors that make it difficult for individuals with these sexual identities to make their sexuality visible. One of the reasons for the reluctance to disclose is the high levels of violence that LGBTQI+ individuals experience in the country when expressing or performing their sexuality. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5, which considers the factors that influenced whether my participants disclosed their sexuality.

Confusion is part of the initial stages of sexual awareness, and this is caused by numerous factors. For my participants, one of the factors was religion. The negative views on homosexuality in religious spaces have made it difficult for individuals to explore a queer identity, especially in their youth (Lapinski & Mckirman, 2013). There are limited representations of LGBTQI+ individuals who are religious and a significant amount of LGBTQI+ individuals have left these formal institutions globally (Beagan and Hattie, 2015). On the African continent some LGBTQI+ individuals have been able to stay within religious institutions while claiming their sexuality, in these challenging situations (Robertson, 2020) . Secondly within religious spaces even there are representations of LGBTQI+ individuals, they are not always celebrated but rather they are accepted in ways in which they cannot always express their sexuality within these spaces. This then means that they must navigate a tightrope as they fear rejection (Beagan & Hattie, 2015). All of this makes it difficult for LGBTQI+ individuals irrespective of their age to discover or claim their sexuality. One of my participants, Nabeelah (25), commented:

So, Islam does not advocate for anything that is not heterosexual if you are keeping it a hundred, it was difficult for me as a child to even discuss or explore my feelings towards other girls and that was really hard in trying to understand my sexuality in a Muslim household.

When I said to her that there are queer Muslims who are advocating for non-heterosexuality in the community, she responded:

For me growing up that was not my experience. I think that times are changing but I knew that for me when I was younger, I could not discuss my feelings towards girls to my family as I knew that they would disapprove.

Another respondent, Amanda (24), said:

I grew up in a Catholic household and I went to a Catholic school and in both spaces the idea of liking girls could not exist even though some of the girls I went to school with I was kissing and liking.

The role of religion in shaping an individual's identity is critical (Judge, 2019). In many societies, religion plays a critical role in shaping what people believe and their values, especially as these relate to their sexuality. Colonialism introduced a particular type of Christianity that believes non-heterosexuality is a sin and should be frowned upon (Ndzovu, 2019). Both Nabeelah and Amanda illustrate how religion influenced how they viewed their early sexual identity in their families, but also outside of the family, in the school context. This influence was not positive, and so it caused confusion and a need to hide their sexuality from their families for fear of disapproval, which in some ways influenced whether they have come out to their friends

and family.

Significant to the disapproval found in religious circles is the influence of heteronormativity. The role of heteronormativity in shaping an individual's sexual identity cannot be overestimated. As mentioned earlier, heteronormativity extends itself into religious, political and social spaces, and this influences the norms and behaviour of an individual. For some of my participants, the way in which it influenced their sexuality was that not only did they feel it was wrong, but they viewed it as not the norm, and not the ideal of what sexual desire or attraction could or should be.

Samantha (58) commented:

I grew up in a time when they were teaching heteronormativity without being explicit, so we were raised in that environment, and we were trained for marriage... In high school I had to meet our headmistress at her car and carry her bag as the Head Girl, as that was one of my duties. She used to touch me in these small physical ways. It was not harassment, and looking back it was sensual and I did feel something, but I just shut that out and did not think about it at all. It just was not a possibility, so I never thought anything of it.

Samantha's experience shows how heteronormativity groomed her as a young woman to think of being married to a man as her goal, and it caused her to not explore her same-sex feelings.

Historically, heteronormativity not only groomed women to think of themselves as marital partners, but also regulated a woman's sexuality by presenting heterosexual marriage as the only option for romantic partnership. This is important as one of the common outputs that is expected from heterosexual marriage is family. In most heterosexual marriages, women are expected to give birth to children. The ability to influence women on what type of romantic partnerships they

should have becomes important in society.

Another respondent, Mpho (35), commented:

I was constantly fighting against the machine of heteronormativity, like why must I wash dishes? Why must I be the wife waiting for the man if I want to have my own career? Do I even want to have kids? This translated in me questioning my ideas of what it means to be a girl, but as a Jehovah's Witness you are trained to not even think outside of the definitions of what it means to be a girl and you are definitely not allowed to question any other romantic situations except for you being with a man. This is done through the religion, where you only hang around other people who are Jehovah's Witnesses and you don't do sports or have any type of social stuff except the church and those in the church. I just never thought of having a relationship or liking another girl.

Again, the heteronormativity comes through in religion, as Mpho is socialized to think of herself in a particular way as a girl even though she questions it. For both Samantha and Mpho, the heteronormative socialization they experienced did not allow for them to even think about having any same-sex attraction, even if they had an experience of this; but for participants such as Dineo, Karabo and Nabeelah, heteronormativity was not as influential in their lives, so they still had an option to explore a different sexual identity even if they did it in a secretive manner. This highlights the different levels of influence that religion has had on my respondents and how it impacted how they viewed their sexuality and their gender. Secondly, this highlights the age difference between the two groups of participants, and how society has changed some of its norms and beliefs over time in ways that allow individuals to discover their sexuality. I believe the South African Constitution's entrenchment of LGBTQI+ rights has offered individuals the

space to be able to explore a queer identity. In this instance this space is similar to a belief or norm that LGBTQI+ individuals can be allowed to think about their same-sex desires, and they do not need to be in denial of these feelings as the law prohibits them. This space continues to be limited, because of the abovementioned factors that have resulted in individuals not disclosing their identity initially, even though they have the legal right to do so. This can be viewed in the case of Babalwa (24), who said:

I have never ever viewed myself as heterosexual. Even as a young girl I knew that I liked boys and girls. I always enjoyed kissing boys and girls. I knew I could not tell my family because they are Christian, but that did not stop me and did not make me feel bad. I have just always known, and in high school I had a girlfriend.

Babalwa was one of the few participants who recognized their bisexuality early on. For most queer individuals, the sexuality they discover is rarely a bisexual one. Reasons for this are the hetero/homo binary that exists, combined with the 'bisexual erasure' that occurs in regard to queer identities (Yoshino, 2000). I asked Babalwa if she was public with her girlfriend when she was younger, and she replied:

No way! I come from a small town and a very religious family and so I couldn't share that. I can only imagine what my family and friends and even people in the town would say.

Again, the heteronormative religious influence continues, with queer individuals being socialized to believe that having a queer identity means that something is wrong with them, which makes them hide their actions and identity. This then creates internal conflict which influences how they shape their sexual identity.

Another participant, Kefilwe (26), also recognized that they had had a bisexual identity at a younger age. They commented:

I just remember liking boys and girls from a young age. Both groups made me feel those initial feelings of liking someone and that was clearly there, and I felt that something was wrong with me.

When I asked Kefilwe why they felt something was wrong with them, they commented:

... I mean you are told as a child that you must like boys and so when you know that you like both boys and girls you kind of feel weird and maybe even crazy. It was a whole mental mess with me.

For Kefilwe, the idea of being ‘crazy’ highlights how in earlier times bisexuality was viewed as a mental illness (Johnson, 2016). Currently, the idea of being ‘crazy’ is translated into questioning the legitimacy of a bisexual identity, which does occur, with bisexual individuals being called ‘confused’ or ‘transitioning’. Bisexuals are ‘confused’ because they cannot pick a side (hetero/homo) and they are ‘transitioning’ into them becoming either gay or lesbian. These kinds of terms question the legitimacy of a bisexual identity and create stigma and biphobia around it, making it harder for individuals to disclose their identity as they fear being labelled in this derogatory manner.

Some of my participants discovered their bisexuality later in their lives, when they started to recognize that they were attracted to women as well as men. Samantha commented:

... I really decided to explore my bisexual identity when I met a woman while I was married. I was intoxicated by this woman, and I just knew I wanted to be with her. It

actually caused my divorce, but I knew I wanted to be with her.

Another participant, Tshepiso (27), commented:

Growing up I just assumed that I was straight, and it was not until somewhere in my undergrad I remember just questioning my sexuality and thinking that maybe I could be something other than straight.

When I asked Tshepiso what made her question her sexuality, she replied:

It first started with a dream I had about a girl in a romantic way, and then I – there was a queer girl, and she was openly bi. One day we were playing truth or dare, and she hit on me and long story short, we ended up kissing... I really liked it and there was just a strong attraction.

Both Samantha and Tshepiso highlight how the development of an individual's sexuality does not only occur in your early years but can also be shaped later in your life. This then introduces the idea of sexuality being fluid rather than static, constantly changing over time, and being influenced by various factors in an individual's life. For both Samantha and Tshepiso, the discovery of their bisexuality later in life was influenced by external factors and by the time in which they were living. Samantha was born in the late eighties. She grew up in a time where South African women did not have as much sexual agency as compared to women who were born after 1994. For my participants born after 1994, it was evident that even though they still had challenges in claiming their sexuality publicly, there have been positive steps forward, as they were able to discuss what sexual pleasures or same-sex desires feels like, publicly. . This means Samantha did not see as women claiming their sexual agency while she was growing up

as compared to my other participants. For Tshepiso she subconsciously had these feelings for females and then when she was a bit older in her teenage years, she experienced that desire in real life and enjoyed it. This highlights how sexuality is not as simple as being hetero/homo, but rather is more nuanced, depending on the individual. Secondly it also shows how sexuality can shift and change over time and it is not static. External issues such as the politics of a country and its acceptance of queer identities allows for individuals to explore their sexuality which allows for it to no longer be something that LGBTQI+ individuals must hide but they can allow these desires to come to the fore and express themselves. One of the most significant scholars concerned with bisexuality, specifically bisexual women, as referred to in the literature review in Chapter 2, is Diamond (2008). In her book, *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire*, she makes the argument that women's sexuality is fluid and can change over time, for various reasons. I believe that this argument is consistent with the experiences of most of my participants I interviewed, as I believe that multiple factors have influenced how they have discovered and claimed their bisexuality, as seen with Samantha and Tshepiso. Bisexuality allows for individuals to be able to be attracted to different individuals of different genders or non-genders over a lifetime, and not be restricted to the binaries within a hetero/homo box, thus allowing for a fluid understanding of sexual identities. This was a point made by Nabeelah (25), who commented:

I just find that people want to understand my sexual identity in a binary way and put me in a box and I don't like that... Who knows, I could end up with a man and then get a divorce and end up with a woman. I am open to exploring that part of me and not allowing for it to be limited. I don't like the feeling of being limited. We should all be allowed to explore.

As the experiences and views of Samantha and Nabeelah show, bisexuality offers a space for individuals to explore their identity regardless of age, and of society's expectations of how sexuality must be performed. Nabeelah does say that she is frustrated that people view her sexuality in a binary (hetero/homo) way, and she is seeking for people to see it in a fluid manner. A fluid identity also allows for other social factors (religion, heteronormativity) to be considered when trying to understand sexual identities. Ndzovu (2019) examines how Islam plays a role in causing individuals in coastal towns in Kenya to view being homosexual in a negative manner. At the same time, he shows that there are LGBTQI+ individuals who are Muslim and describes how a small community is being built even in challenging spaces. These individuals do not necessarily claim a particular identity in public, but their sexual practices, attractions and desires indicate that they are not heterosexual. The lack of disclosure and claiming a particular sexuality as understood from a Global North perspective, in this context allows for a fluid understanding of sexuality, and of how context becomes important in understanding sexualities. Research, and examples such as the one in Kenya, highlight the need for a Global South understanding of queer identities that moves beyond the fixation on names and categories, taking into consideration the contexts of individuals' lives, and how this shapes how they will perform their sexualities. Bisexuality could be a way in which we approach sexuality outside of the categories and ultimately begin to use other names, if necessary, that are appropriate.

4.3 Queer identity as 'un-African' and bisexuality stigma management

For many of my black participants, one of the consistent responses I gathered when asking about their early recognition of their queer identity was how it was viewed as 'un-African'. As referenced in the literature review in Chapter 2, this way of thinking makes the argument that

non-heterosexuality is a Western phenomenon and not originally from the African continent (Tamale, 2017). This then means that African individuals who publicly claim an LGBTQI+ identity are believed to still be under the influence of colonialism, and this must be opposed. This is in line with the idea that those who are homosexuals are perpetuating the agenda of the Global North in the Global South and this must be rejected in order for African countries to succeed economically and socially. For some of my participants, it showed up in the early stages of their identity development. This is evident in a comment made by Vuyo (24), who said:

I just remember my family sitting for dinner and we were discussing something on the TV which had gay people and my mother saying that this [being gay] is such a white thing and not a black thing, and everyone laughed as if they were agreeing with her comment.

When I asked her how that made her feel, she said:

I just knew at that moment, even though I was young, that I could not tell my family. I just knew it. They just were never going to understand or even accept it. I felt sad and a bit rejected but I didn't say anything.

For Vuyo and her family, the influence goes even further than the idea of being 'un-African', to include the idea of race, as a social norm which exists in black spaces that LGBTQI+ identities are something that white individuals in a white community have and are not part of black communities and black individuals' identities. Again, this speaks to the idea of homosexuality as something 'un-African', meaning that it is a white identity associated with Western people and not a black identity of those from Africa. During the rest of the interview, Vuyo informed me that she had still not disclosed her bisexuality to her family. Vuyo's response illustrates the critical influence amongst black communities of the idea of LGBTQI+ identity being 'foreign', a

colonial import, and how this shapes the ways in which black LGBTQI+ individuals will negotiate how they explore their sexual identity with those close to them. The result of this is a feeling of possible rejection and therefore Vuyo has not disclosed her sexuality to her family. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5 which looks at the reasons why some of my participants have informed those around them personally and professionally.

Vuyo was not the only one to have had this experience. Sheila (29) commented:

I am not from South Africa, and I just remember my mom saying things like being gay is 'demonic', the 'influence of white schools that black kids are going to' and 'part of South Africa and not from Zambia'.

When I probed what Sheila meant about her family being from Zambia and not South Africa, she commented:

There are certain parts of Africa that are just not going to accept LGBTQ people. Zambia is one of them, and people from there just view it [homosexuality] as a South African thing and not an African thing.

Currently in Zambia homosexuality is deemed to be illegal (Schwikowski, 2022). This does not mean that LGBTQI+ individuals and organizations do not exist, but they face challenges in the country in relation to expressing their sexual identity in public. Another aspect that I found interesting in Sheila's comment was how LGBTQI+ identities were assumed by her mother to exist in certain geographical spaces and not in others. For Sheila's mom, being an LGBTQI+ individual seemed to be something that originated from South Africa and not from Zambia. One of the things that informs this attitude is the legal and political recognition that LGBTQI+

individuals have in South Africa, which do not exist in Zambia. This then fuels the idea of homosexuality being ‘foreign’, not only to Zambia but to the continent as a whole, with South Africa seen as just an exception to the norm. This comment shows how geographical space shapes the ways in which LGBTQI+ individuals can express themselves publicly, and how certain spaces, in this case countries, can be incredibly limiting for these individuals. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6, which looks at how my participants engaged with different spaces in Johannesburg.

The comment made by Sheila about ‘the influence of white schools’ again highlights how being an LGBTQI+ individual is seen as a ‘white’ identity, and something that is not intrinsic to black people or communities. Race comes into this discussion, as being homosexual is viewed as something foreign and not ‘black’, that can therefore be questioned in terms of its legitimacy on the continent. The comment also assumes a monolithic view of a black identity, and that all black individuals on the continent subscribe to the same views on different topics. As mentioned earlier, LGBTQI+ identities have incorrectly been viewed as ‘un-African’ and not part of black or African societies, yet this idea persists, and translates itself into the criminalization of homosexuality and violence and harassment towards LGBTQI+ individuals. It has a significant impact on how LGBTQI+ individuals can discover or express their sexuality at a young age. Some of the bisexual women I interviewed did mention that in their families LGBTQI+ identities were viewed as a ‘white thing’, and this made them apprehensive about disclosing their sexuality. Ayanda (25) commented:

I don't know hey, I just don't know if I would tell my family because they would just look at me confused and tell me that I have been around too many white people and my friends, and they just would not understand...it would just be too much.

From the comments above it is evident how race, heteronormativity, family, religion and space intersect with each other at different points in shaping how my participants were able to discuss, explore and express their sexuality as younger individuals in Johannesburg. These factors must be considered when looking at LGBTQI+ identities.

The binary understanding of bisexuality has resulted in a ‘stigma management’ of it. A ‘stigma management’ refers to how, as bisexual individuals have disclosed their sexuality in certain instances, the negative stigma on bisexuality (i.e., that it is ‘not a legitimate sexual identity’, and ‘promiscuous’) has meant they have had to carefully navigate how they respond and engage when they decide to disclose their sexuality. Some of my participants described how difficult it was, as they grew older, to disclose their sexuality, as those who were close to them did not understand what bisexuality was. This is illustrated in Karabo’s (22) comment:

In high school I remember telling my queer friends that I liked both boys and girls. I just remember one of my friends saying to me ‘you can’t like both friend you have to choose’. It just created this like secrecy, and in some ways began my own internalised phobia on bisexuality.

Another participant, Lindiwe (21), commented:

I have found discussing my sexuality with my straight friends to be very difficult. I find that I walk on eggshells because some of them have questioned my sexuality. They were like, ‘oh she’s doing it for clout’... I am not comfortable enough to share stuff with them when I am with a woman.

Another participant, Robyn (28), made a similar comment to Lindiwe’s, when she said:

I remember in high school in Cape Town two students who were 'out', and they were given such a hard time, and I just did not tell anyone about my bisexuality. It was only later in high school when I told a friend I was bisexual, and they were like 'oh, it's just a trend'. It was like 'you don't want to be this at all'.

For both Lindiwe and Karabo, it is evident that they have had to cope with the negative stigma that has come from disclosing their sexuality. For Karabo, what is important to note is that she engaged in stigma management with other queer individuals by deciding not to tell others about her sexual identity, as she did not want to deal with the negative comments she expected to receive, and this has resulted in her developing a biphobia. The legitimacy of bisexuality has always been a source of tension amongst other queer individuals. This is influenced by the limited understanding of sexual identities as simply hetero/homo, and by an intentional erasure of bisexuality (Yoshino, 2000). The example of Lindiwe highlights how others view a bisexual identity as one in which bisexuals are trying to get attention. This is in line with the idea of this form of sexuality as just a 'phase', and not a legitimate identity (Flanders & Hatfield, 2014). This is supported by Robyn's comment, which indicates that the idea of being lesbian or even bisexual is viewed as a trend, and something that nobody should want to be. This again contributes to the legitimacy of bisexuality being questioned. Lindiwe was not comfortable to disclose her identity to her heterosexual friends, because of this response. Both Lindiwe and Karabo have had to manage the stigma of claiming a bisexual identity by not disclosing to those around them. Both their comments illustrate how biphobia comes from heterosexual and homosexual individuals, and how bisexual individuals must navigate that discrimination. This in turn creates feelings of rejection and despair that my participants face, and they navigate that by managing who it is they choose to disclose to.

4.4 Tension between bisexual and lesbian women

Many of the bisexual individuals I interviewed have had to manage the stigma that they face when disclosing their identity. This management has occurred in multiple spaces, but as seen in the comment from Karabo in the previous section, it is interesting to note that the stigma has sometimes come from LGBTQI+ spaces and individuals. In my research, one of the themes that came up was the tension that exists between bisexual individuals and other LGBTQI+ individuals, specifically between bisexual women and lesbian women. This tension is not new, and has been researched by, for example, Weiss (2011), who argues that it is fuelled by some lesbian women (those who define their sexuality in political terms) arguing that, by continuing to date men, bisexual women are still participating in the ‘patriarchy’. This is informed by the idea, as previously discussed in the literature review, that in order to gain equality for women, women must not engage in relationships with men that will always put them at an unfair advantage both in the public and private space, specifically romantic relationships. It must be noted that tensions have also occurred between bisexual men and other queer groups, but this research focuses specifically on bisexual women. Bisexual individuals have experienced multiple forms of discrimination from other queer individuals. This is influenced by the binary understanding of sexual identities, the result of which is the invisibility of bisexuality. Dineo (22) highlighted this when she commented on the experience she had had with other lesbian women when disclosing her sexuality:

I have found it very difficult to tell my lesbian friends that I am bisexual. I usually get negative comments about how I am not serious but also how I am not really queer.

Another participant, Nomvula (21), commented:

I have found one of the most difficult [groups of] people to tell about my bisexual identity is lesbian women. I have found that some of these women just do not want to believe that I am bisexual or that I am just playing around being bisexual and rather I am just curious.

One of the most shocking comments came from Kopano (27), who said:

... and she said to me that some people will just wear this identity to enjoy themselves and enjoy their curiosity on other women and go back to their lives.

Lastly, Lauren (45) commented:

I went to a queer event in Braam [Braamfontein, an area of the Johannesburg CBD] and when I told the women that I am bisexual another woman replied to me and said 'you are still dating men. Why?' I was so shocked to get that answer from another queer women.

Kopano used the word 'enjoy' when she quoted responses from lesbian women about her sexual identity. The use of this word indicates that the lesbian women thought when Kopano was done 'enjoying' her bisexual identity she could just go back to a heterosexual identity. This way of thinking reinforces the idea of a bisexual identity being a 'phase', and once bisexual women are done with that 'phase' as it is no longer fun for them, they will return to what benefits them. In this comment it is assumed that being with a man will be better off for bisexual women and that is ultimately what they want. There is failure by the lesbian women that Kopano surrounds herself with to recognise her sexuality as legitimate and not just something she is doing for fun.

Both Nomvula's and Dineo's comments indicate again how the legitimacy of a bisexual identity is questioned, but here specifically by their lesbian friends. Both Kopano's and Lauren's comments are like the ones that I have heard from other bisexual women. During the research, I had multiple conversations with lesbian women about their views on bisexual individuals, specifically bisexual women. I was not able to have proper interviews with the lesbian women, but I was able to identify similar views held by these women. Some of them have negative views about bisexual women who still engage in romantic relationships with men. A significant comment that shocked me was made by one woman (Anonymous A), who said:

Whenever I hang out with or date a bisexual woman I always say, 'why are you still sleeping with men?' I just don't trust these women.

Another woman (Anonymous B) commented:

I just don't know if I can take you seriously as a feminist if you are a bisexual woman. Why are you allowing patriarchy to come into your private space such as your romantic relationship?

Anonymous A refers to 'trust' as part of her negative feelings towards bisexual women, indicating that she does not trust these women because of their sexual identity. Trust, and the lack thereof, are used by others when describing their feelings towards bisexual individuals (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013). As seen from her statement above, Anonymous A simply does not trust bisexual women because of their identity, irrespective of their character. This feeling is prevalent within LGBTQI+ spaces, as other LGBTQI+ individuals have expressed their distrust of bisexual individuals because they associate this identity with promiscuity (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013).

Anonymous B's comment is similar to the response that Kopano received from a lesbian woman.

Both statements stem from a radical feminist perspective that views engagement with a man in a heterosexual romantic relationship as a betrayal of the commitment to the dismantling of the patriarchy. This idea has always had relevance in queer feminist spaces and was introduced into popular discussion by radical feminists such as Wittig (1980). In her numerous essays she not only questions what it means to be a woman in society, but also argues for the ‘political lesbianism’ of women to challenge the patriarchy. This means that even though women may be attracted to men, they must make a political decision to only have same-sex relationships. In South Africa, this idea has not gained momentum, as other factors such as race and class need to be taken into consideration when challenging the patriarchy (Matebeni, 2011), which makes it difficult to commit to political lesbianism. This can be applied to other parts of the continent and the globe where these factors exist which makes it challenging. Organizing in South Africa has mainly occurred around the factors that affect individuals more at an economic and social level. At the same time, women have organized against the high levels of gender-based violence (GBV) that affect both queer and straight women, which is a form of challenge to the patriarchy. Political lesbianism has remained an issue mainly in informal spaces and expresses itself in private conversations. This can be seen from the responses that Lauren and Kopano received when disclosing their bisexual identity to lesbian women. I got the sense that there was apprehension and nervousness about being truly accepted in feminist spaces if you are going to still be in a romantic relationship with a man. These sentiments were echoed by other participants, as many of them did say that they had experienced this negative feedback from lesbians when disclosing their sexuality, making it difficult for them to disclose.

Anonymous B argued that bisexual women cannot be feminist, as they still engage in romantic relationships with men. On the African continent, one cannot separate the struggle for gender

equality from the struggle for racial equality (Sika & Okech, 2019). The fight against racial injustice stemming from colonialism has been influential and has informed the fight for gender equality. Women with different sexualities have been influential in fighting for gender equality and therefore they cannot be excluded as not being feminists because they continue to have relationships with men. Rather, the inclusion of sexual and political rights for queer individuals needs to be included in the discussion of racial and gender freedom, instead of being subject to criteria relating to who qualifies as a feminist, as this does not acknowledge the intersectional nature of the multiple oppressions, we all experience as women.

Another perspective that I got from both the lesbian women I spoke to, and from some of my participants, was that lesbian women are apprehensive about being in relationships with bisexual women. This was informed by the immense amount of betrayal lesbian women experienced through bisexual women cheating on them, especially with men. One of my participants, Brooke (35), commented:

In my previous relationship with a woman, I always found it difficult to be with her because she would constantly doubt my love and commitment to our relationship... There was always this constant doubting of me and whether I could be with a woman and not desire to be with a man.

Another participant, Amanda (24), commented:

I understand why lesbian women do not want to date bisexual women. We have to be honest, some of us have been disloyal towards these women especially with men. Some of us say we are bisexual, but I think we are bi-curious, and we hurt other people.

Both of these views were also reinforced by lesbian women, and this way of thinking feeds into the idea of bisexuals being non-monogamous or curious in relation to their sexuality (Barker & Langdridge, 2008). For Brooke, there is a constant doubting of her commitment to her romantic relationship when she is involved with certain women across racial lines, because she is bisexual. Amanda's admission of some bisexual women's infidelity has made me reflect on the fact that some bisexual women, especially those who are more curious and want to explore their sexual desires and attractions than bisexual, have engaged in harmful acts towards lesbian women, which has resulted in the apprehension referred to above. There have been bisexual women who have not been honest in their engagements with lesbian women, and this has contributed to lesbian women having negative feelings about bisexuality. It is important to note, though, based on my participants' comments quoted above and the views of lesbian women, that while there has been a sense of betrayal, it can be argued that this sense of betrayal should not be attributed to a sexual identity but rather to the individuals involved. This is critical and needs to be the starting point when looking at the betrayal rather than the sexual identity of the individual. The constant questioning of the legitimacy of bisexuality allows for individuals to ascribe their apprehension about their relationships to the bisexuality of the individuals concerned instead of the individual, and view them in a negative manner, which results in the stigmatization of bisexuality.

One of the common themes that both my participants and the lesbian women I spoke with brought up was the idea that bisexual women get to 'pass' because of their sexuality. One of the better definitions that I found of 'passing' is that presented by Lingel (2009, p. 382), who says that it is 'a practice to be able to assume (either actively or passively) membership within multiple communities.' This idea is not only found in spaces where sexual identities are being

discussed, but also occurs in racial contexts, where ‘people of colour’ have been able to pass as ‘white’ in certain communities (Ghabrial, 2019). This is assumed to be true for bisexual individuals when they are in what appears to be a heterosexual romantic relationship with a cisgendered or opposite-sex individual. It is evident in the earlier comment made by Kopano, where the idea is that a bisexual has embarked on an adventure of curiosity, and when that adventure is over or becomes uncomfortable, they can slip back into heterosexual relationships and not face the constant difficulties of being lesbian. This comment is similar to the critique that bisexuals have faced from other queer individuals, namely that bisexual individuals can ‘choose’ when they want to be queer or not, and because of that they do not necessarily face the same challenges as other queer individuals, such as physical violence. One of my participants, Tshepiso (27), said:

Even though I am still new in my bisexuality I am fully aware of lesbians not wanting to date me because I disclose that I am attracted to men still and they always question me if I am really queer. I get it but I don't get it, so I just try to listen and understand where they are coming from, especially when it comes to violence and harassment experienced by lesbian women.

On the other hand, Mpho (35) said:

Lesbians have been so violent towards me. One said to me that some people will just wear this identity to enjoy themselves, enjoy their curiosity and use us as an adventure and then go back to their heterosexual lives. This for me makes me reluctant to tell some people that I am bisexual.

It must be noted that in certain contexts ‘passing’ is an act used to prevent harm (McLean, 2007).

This is true for queer individuals in contexts where identifying as queer is frowned upon, or deemed illegal, and therefore they must deploy the act of ‘passing’ in order to avoid facing violence. Bisexuals have experienced negative responses from both the heterosexual and homosexual communities, and therefore some have been reluctant to disclose their sexual identity (Barker & Langdridge, 2008). In Tshepiso’s comment the idea of ‘questioning’ her comes up because she is still attracted to men. This relates to the idea of a bisexual identity not being legitimate, since individuals can ‘pass’ because they can ‘opt out’ of being queer when it comes to difficult moments. What is interesting to note is that Tshepiso decides not to push back against the lesbian women who question her, but rather chooses to listen and understand their perspective. Bisexual individuals do not always challenge the hetero/homo binary, because certain contexts may not be beneficial to them in regard to being part of particular communities. Tshepiso is still in the early stages of discovering her bisexuality, so she is careful not to push back against negative responses to her identity. This is a form of trying to prevent harm from the lesbian women and their questioning of her sexuality.

For Mpho, her emotionally violent experience has resulted in her being apprehensive about disclosing her fluid sexual identity to lesbian women. The idea of curiosity comes up with her as well, because the lesbian women in her life seem to think that her bisexuality is just ‘an adventure’ that she will turn away from and return to a heterosexual identity. Again, this comes back to the questioning of bisexuality. One of the unique things about bisexuality is that there are no identifiable features of a bisexual individual (i.e., dress code, language, community, etc.) (Maliepaard, 2017). When I asked my participants if they look for any identifiable features when trying to identify a bisexual all, of them said no. This lack of specificity means that bisexual individuals do not sit in a fixed space of sexual identity markers and experiences, and this can be

frustrating for other individuals, as evidenced in the response that Mpho receives. This frustration and ultimately discomfort result in the negative comments that bisexuals experience.

4.5 Disclosure to partners and others

The disclosure of an LGBTQI+ identity has always been challenging for individuals. The negative perceptions about bisexuality and the questioning of it as a legitimate sexuality, have made it difficult for bisexual individuals to disclose to others around them, especially their romantic partners (Chan et al., 2020). It is evident from the sections above that for some of my participants, this reluctance is informed by their earlier experiences when discussions on LGBTQI+ identities or same-sex intimate events in their lives occurred. A specific question I asked my participants was: ‘How important is it to you to disclose your bisexuality to a partner?’ Diverse responses were given, but one of the main reasons why participants were reluctant to disclose to their sexual partners was the difficulty they had in trying to explain or define bisexuality. This was exemplified in the response of Ayanda (25) to the question:

I find it difficult to disclose to partners because I have to describe what a bisexual identity is and that is always confusing for people, and so I don't tell them unless I really feel comfortable to tell them. I just say I am queer and move forward.

Nabeelah (25) commented:

... I just always struggle to tell partners that I am bisexual, because then there will be a whole host of questions on what that means, and I just don't have time for the biphobia when I try to explain it.

As mentioned earlier one of the difficulties in disclosing bisexuality is that there is no specific

definition of what it is. This is because of the fluid nature of the sexuality. When I asked my participants how they would define bisexuality, they expressed multiple understandings of it. Some of them defined it in a binary manner, like Lerato (21), who said:

For me I think bisexuality is an attraction to both males and females.

Other participants had a much more nuanced understanding of bisexuality that did not fit into a binary definition of sexuality, as Robyn (28) said:

It means I am attracted to both men and women and those who are gender-non-conforming.

Lastly, Pumla (26) said:

I'm attracted to who I am attracted and who they are is most important.

All the above definitions have made it very difficult to have a fixed definition of a bisexual identity. Breetveld (2021) argues that the benefits of having a fluid understanding of a bisexual identity are that a fixed definition of this sexuality creates boundaries around what is and is not a bisexual identity. This boundary does not allow for the fluidity of bisexuality that seeks to move away from the binary and the boundaries. Breetveld argues that in the fixation with finding a definition of bisexuality, we reinforce the boundaries and the binaries of how we understand sexualities. The comments of my participants quoted above illustrate how there continue to be no boundaries when defining bisexuality, and this allows for it to be a fluid identity. At the same time, this fluidity makes it very difficult for bisexual individuals to be able to define what bisexuality is, and this makes it difficult for them to disclose their sexuality, as seen in Nabeelah's and Ayanda's comments. For Ayanda she makes the decision to use the word 'queer'

which immediately will inform the other individual that she is non-heterosexual. This can be seen as a form of stigma management as she does not want to deal with the confusion that will come when she says she is bisexual. This is similar to Nabeelah manages the stigma by making the decision not to disclose at all as she does not want to experience the biphobia that could possibly occur.

Some of my participants did disclose their sexuality to their partners, and they received different responses from men and women. When disclosing to men, they had mixed responses. Zinzi (29) commented:

I am always nervous to tell partners I am bisexual because I am so tired of the negative response. When I tell men I can see that they begin to oversexualize me, and they think we can have other women in our relationship.

When I asked Zinzi how that makes her feel, she responded:

It makes me uncomfortable and also it makes me think that you think I am not monogamous as a bisexual person.

Another participant, Amanda, felt the same way when disclosing to men. She commented:

I think because I'm a monogamous person and so when I have told men they seem to think that we can have a threesome with another girl now.

When disclosing to women there were different responses.

Dineo (22) said:

I disclosed to an ex-girlfriend, and she said to me that she wouldn't do certain sex acts on

me anymore because she's like she doesn't want to be where a man has been, and she started saying I'm going to cheat on her... I try to date other woman who are bisexual.

Lisa (34) said:

I have found women to be more open to me being bisexual... I first assess if it is a safe space, then I will tell a partner if I am bisexual even if I am with a man.

Jennifer (33) made an interesting comment on disclosure when she said:

I think it's more important that I disclose to them that they are not the only person that I am sleeping with.

When I probed and asked why this was the case, she responded:

I don't disclose to people that I am bisexual because in our discussions of 'who was your last relationship' I will let them know that I am bisexual and that I have been with both men and women. For me I think it is more important to disclose that I am sleeping with X, Y or Z person and that they are okay with that.

The comments by Zinzi and Amanda are in line with the negative responses that bisexual individuals have experienced when disclosing their sexual identity. For women, the focus on who they are in romantic relationships with speaks to the continuous regulation of women's sexuality in a heteronormative society, even when they themselves are not heterosexual. The responses of men that Zinzi and Amanda mention indicate how men still have an influence on how women construct their sexual identity. This construction is usually centred around the desires of men and women's desires are not included. Amanda did not even mention a threesome

when she discloses to a man, but there is this assumption that she will have a sexual desire for a threesome just like the man she told. This speaks to the underlying assumption that bisexual individuals are not monogamous and are open to different types of relationships. These were similar to the responses they have received from lesbian women.

Dineo's comment echoes what other participants mentioned in regard to their disclosure to women, that is, a negative response to a bisexual identity. Dineo's comment that a previous partner indicated to her that she did not want to be in the same intimate spaces where a man had been is an important one. I asked Dineo if this woman was a lesbian, and she said yes. The result of this was the distrust of Dineo as a monogamous partner, and this again feeds into the idea of bisexual women being promiscuous, especially with other men. A way in which Dineo has managed the stigma against her as a bisexual woman is that she has decided as much as possible to date other bisexual women. This will make it easier for her when she does disclose her sexuality as her partner will understand.

Lisa, on the other hand, has received a positive response when she discloses to women, but she was quick to say that this must happen in a safe space. The term 'safe space' originated in the US in the mid-1960's by and for LGBTQI+ individuals as a space where they could find resistance and community from the political and social repression they experienced (Kenny, 2001). This term has expanded and is used by marginalised groups as a way to describe their space and how they are critical to how they express and perform their multiple identities. LGBTQI+ individuals are always seeking safe spaces, as they fear the homophobia, transphobia and possible violence that could come from disclosing their sexual identity. Lisa ensures that she is in a safe space with her romantic partner, regardless of their gender, and only then will she disclose, as she fears the homophobia she could possibly experience.

For Jennifer, disclosure of her sexual identity is less important than admitting to being polyamorous. A bisexual identity has been linked to polyamory, but in a negative manner, in research conducted by Klesse (2011) in London, and Baumgartner (2021) in the rest of Europe. If a bisexual individual engages in polyamory, it is assumed that their sexual identity reinforces this type of relationship, and they are viewed as a person not to be trusted and who cannot be in a monogamous relationship. Even though this research was conducted in Europe, there are some similarities between the results reported by the abovementioned authors and my research. By disclosing her sexual behaviour instead of her sexuality, Jennifer moves towards the idea of disclosure of a sexual identity as less important than behaviour. This way of thinking resonates with my other participants, who did not feel the need to disclose their sexual identity to romantic partners or others. This I believe allows for sexuality to not be this fixed identity but rather shifting and changing as a person evolves and allows all their sexual attractions to be explored. Bisexuality offers the possibility to move away from the fixation of sexual identities and allows for people to be attracted to whomever over the course of their lifetime.

All the above responses indicate the complicated challenge that bisexual individuals face in disclosing their sexuality to their partners, but also how they have found various ways to navigate this challenge.

4.6 Conclusion

The discovery of a queer identity by individuals is not confined to a specific age range. As seen in this chapter, my participants discovered their bisexuality at different points in their lives. I believe this indicates how sexuality does not have a clear fixed timeline, and that discovery for an individual occurs differently depending on their context. For my participants, the contexts

were different, but factors such as religion, culture, race, heteronormativity and patriarchal ideas continue to influence how they navigate that discovery. For bisexual individuals, the added layer of a negative perception of bisexuality in both heterosexual and homosexual spaces creates a challenging context for them to navigate, especially when it comes to disclosure, as bisexuality argues for a fluid understanding of sexualities and a shift away from fixed binaries and sexual identities.

Chapter Five: ‘Coming Out’ and Multiple Understandings of Bisexuality by Participants

5.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at how participants in my research understood and felt about the idea of ‘coming out’. I asked participants how they define coming out, what it means to them as bisexual women and whether they attach any importance and relevance to this act, which has historically been significant to LGBTQI+ individuals. In the chapter I report on their responses to these questions and argue that these responses show that there are different perspectives on the act of coming out. Some participants believe it remains essential, while others argue that it is not, as it represents an act of conforming to heteronormative behaviour. I argue that coming out remains a centre of ambivalent feelings. Some bisexual individuals do not believe in the act, as they fear rejection by friends and family, and the possible threat of violence in certain spaces as non-heterosexuality is still viewed as ‘un-African’, particularly in black communities (Epprecht, 2004). At the same time, other bisexual participants view it as an important act for them to legitimize their bisexuality and other non-conforming sexualities.

I show in this chapter how the resistance to coming out is particularly evident amongst younger bisexual women I interviewed, who disagree with the act as the fluidity of their identities no longer requires the same sort of disclosure. Instead, I show how they argue for a different type and different degree of disclosure that does not subscribe to the heterosexual binary understanding of sexuality. As a result, the idea of sexuality being fluid comes to the fore, together with recognition of how coming out falls into the binary heterosexual understanding of sexuality that makes bisexual and queer identities invisible. Lastly, I look at an act of disclosure

called ‘inviting in’, which is a transnational queer ideology that allows individuals to claim their sexuality taking into consideration the contexts in which they are living, which is important for LGBTQI+ individuals in South Africa.

5.2 The importance of coming out.

Before I discuss how bisexual women who were participants in this research understand coming out, it is important to define what this act encompasses and means. Coming out has been viewed as a critical act in a non-heterosexual individual’s identity development, as it signifies individuals claiming their non-heterosexuality in their public and private lives by no longer staying in the closet of hiding their sexuality, but rather being open about it in public and private spaces (Craig & McInroy, 2014). Historically, in Global North countries, it has been a political act as part of the process of gaining legal recognition and equality, and it has been a social act in the sense of an individual choosing to live authentically in their sexual lives (Brownfield et al., 2018). This act has been important in some formerly colonized countries such as South Africa, where LGBTQI+ individuals of different races, classes and ages have used the act of coming out, combined with activism, to gain political recognition and legal rights for themselves (Gevisser, 1994).

One of the critical contributions to the theorization of coming out in the 20th century came from Sedgwick’s work on queer identities and her book, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). For Sedgwick, ‘the closet’ represents an ‘open secret’, in that queer individuals are ‘open’ in certain public spaces about their sexuality and closeted about it in other spaces for fear of rejection and potential violence (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 35). The door of the closet is not entirely closed but can be open depending on how safe and comfortable LGBTQI+ individuals are. One of the reasons

why some non-heterosexual individuals have chosen to stay in the closet is the limited binary understanding of non-heterosexual identities (Sedgwick, 1990). Historically, when an individual chooses to come out, the only options available for claiming their sexual identity have been gay or lesbian sexuality. This limitation stems from a binary understanding of sexual identities which has resulted in queer individuals' apprehensiveness about the idea of coming out.

The limitation is particularly important for bisexual individuals, for whom coming out of the closet is challenging because the only option they can select other than heterosexuality is homosexuality, and that is limited to either lesbian or gay sexuality. Neither of these options applies to bisexual individuals, and this contributes to them not wanting to come out. In her book, Sedgwick argues for queer theory to be used in the analysis of non-heterosexual identities, as it moves away from the hetero/homo binary of sexual identities and argues for a more fluid understanding of sexuality. This ultimately will allow for more non-heterosexual identities to be able to come out of the closet and claim their sexuality, without feeling limited by binary understandings of sexuality.

'The closet' also represents the idea of limited space and movement. For non-heterosexual individuals, the closet limits where and how they can perform and claim their sexuality in public and private spaces, as they have not come out (Brown, 2002a). Historically, the spaces in which queer individuals have been open about their sexuality have been gay and lesbian bars, clubs and organizations, as there is a common identity which does not have to be hidden, but rather celebrated. The closet affects their physical movement in spaces in which they have not come out, as they must be conscious about how they perform their sexuality, whether through language or physical acts (e.g., being physically romantic with a partner) as this may reveal their sexuality. The closet is also subject to geography, as individuals are highly influenced as to whether they

will come out depending on the social acceptance and political recognition of LGBTQI+ individuals in the spaces they occupy (Brown, 2002a). Queer individuals have been reluctant to come out of the closet, as they could face stigma, various forms of homophobia, criminal charges and physical violence, which has occurred in the South African context (Matebeni, 2013).

This is important for bisexual identity, which, as mentioned earlier, does not fit into the fixed and limited binary understandings of sexual identities; therefore, the act of coming out can be viewed by bisexuals as not representing how they identify. For bisexual women in South Africa, the act does not take into consideration how race, class and space influence whether they will come out or not. The closet therefore is a critical site of power, as it affects movement, performance and ultimately the understanding and lived experiences of non-heterosexual identities.

5.2.1 Authenticity and agency

For bisexual individuals, coming out then represents an opportunity but also a challenge. The opportunity occurs when a bisexual individual can claim their non-heterosexuality in public and private spaces, but the challenge exists because of the limited framing of coming out and the outside factors that can affect whether or not they decide to come out.

An example of an opportunity is evident in the comment of one of my participants, Samantha (58), that for her, coming out is about:

acknowledgement and authenticity about my bisexuality. I think to a very large extent, it's about authenticity, pride and casting off shame and owning my agency. I love who I love, and I will not apologize for that especially as a woman.

One of the main reasons why some of my participants believed that coming out was still an

important act was that it allowed them to be able to acknowledge and authenticate their sexuality. Authenticity is critical to the self-development of an individual, as it allows for them to identify internally and be able to relate that self-identification to the broader society and gain acknowledgement of it (Erickson, 1995). Harbin (2011) introduces the idea of ‘sexual authenticity’, which is the way in which individuals claim their sexuality by identifying with a particular sexuality and being a testimony of that identification to themselves and others. Coming out is a path in which queer individuals claim their sexual authenticity, but also claim their self-authenticity by acknowledging and living their sexuality politically and personally. The idea of authenticity has been challenged by some scholars, as it essentialises sexuality and makes it a fixed social category (Eves, 2004). Queer scholars such as Dutta (2013) in India and Matebeni (2011, 2013) on the African continent have shown how geographical, political and social contexts influence sexualities and how they are not fixed, which allows for people to be able to make sense of and articulate their attractions, behaviours and desires in a manner which is not fixed but is allowed to change over time. When an individual chooses to come out, it is assumed that they will continue to claim this sexuality over the course of their life. Coming out in the current hetero/homo context does not allow for an individual to be able to claim a different sexuality over time which is limited and not inclusive.

In looking at homosexuality in the Global South, the act of coming out has been questioned as a Global North idea and not indigenous to the continent and to other parts of the Global South. Wa Tushabe (2017) has looked at same-sex experiences of indigenous women of Uganda, and has argued that the act of coming out is not indigenous to the women in southwestern Uganda and that they have used indigenous language and performances in order to gain acknowledgement of their sexuality in their communities (Wa Tushabe, 2017). In a study conducted in Indonesia by

Boellstorff (2003), looks at how Indonesians living in the province of South Sulawesi come to understand their non-heterosexuality by still using indigenous language (*waria* for lesbians and gays) and culture. In both examples, queer individuals gain self-acknowledgement and claim their sexual identities without using the act of coming out. These examples also highlight how coming out is not indigenous to Global South countries, and how this Western act does not take into consideration how sexual identities have been acknowledged historically in indigenous communities.

Coming out is still important to Samantha, as her quote shows how she uses this act as a way of first being authentic to herself by claiming her sexuality internally, and then owning her sexuality publicly, using the act of coming out to gain acknowledgement outside of herself and no longer stay in the closet, where only a few are aware of her sexuality. Coming out is also important in this example as Samantha no longer feels shame about her sexuality, but rather is proud of it. As mentioned earlier, the closet can in certain contexts be limiting and, in some cases, a space of negative emotions in which LGBTQI+ individuals cannot claim their sexuality in spaces that are important to them. This is evident with bisexual individuals who have experienced negative responses from others when they disclose their sexuality (Scherrer et al., 2015). For Samantha, the act of coming out allows her to move outside of the limited closet and no longer feel a sense of shame in choosing to identify as a bisexual woman. This highlights how coming out is a tool not only for owning your sexuality, but also for individuals to achieve self-development through sexual authenticity and agency.

The impact of the closet on women's bodies must be considered when discussing coming out. Women's bodies in relation to their sexuality continue to be a site regulated by a heteronormative understanding that argues for women to not have agency over whom they are in

romantic partnerships with, which usually means a man is the preferable partner (Butler, 2006). For women, coming out allows them to exercise their agency through their sexuality, as it allows them to resist having their bodies regulated into heterosexual frameworks and identify with ideas and desires that they deem fit. For bisexual women this is important, as having the agency to identify as they want allows them to claim a more fluid sexuality and no longer be limited by the hetero/homo binary. This is evident in Samantha's comment quoted above that coming out allows her to choose whom she loves and make no apologies for it. Coming out becomes a powerful tool for certain women in specific contexts, such as Samantha, who is a white woman living in suburban Johannesburg, as her choice to use her agency in coming out is not faced with a threat of violence that some black women have experienced and which has therefore made them reluctant to perform the act. This way of thinking is in line with the views of Reddy (2005), who emphasizes the importance of context when discussing disclosure. For black queer activists living under apartheid, their coming out was a way to challenge the national system of racial injustice rather than queer injustice. National liberation and queer liberation were related to each other, because black queer activists faced the threat of imprisonment or violence, making it difficult for them to come out in the same way as white queer activists (Reddy, 2005). Coming out is still difficult for black queer individuals; this will be discussed later in this chapter.

5.2.2 Coming out as political resistance.

As mentioned earlier, coming out has been used historically as a tool to challenge homophobic beliefs and to challenge the idea of non-heterosexuality as being 'un-African' (Epprecht, 2013). Since gaining independence in the early 1950s, African countries have always questioned non-heterosexuality's indigeneity on the continent, even though this belief has been challenged and shown to be incorrect (Epprecht, 2004; Thompson, 1990). Christianity is still influential on the

African continent, as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, and with it the belief that homosexuality is immoral. This ideology has persisted on the continent through the influence of other religions (e.g., Islam) that believe in heterosexuality as the only permissible sexuality and homosexuality as a new form of colonialism (Wahab, 2016). Even faced with these challenges, progress has been made on the continent with the enshrinement of the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals in certain countries, but there continues to be resistance to these rights, which in recent years has resulted in the criminalization of LGBTQI+ sexual identities in Ghana (Akinwotu, 2023) and the murder of LGBTQI+ individuals in South Africa (Harrisberg, 2021).

As mentioned in the literature review, historians have tried to document African sexualities, but this remains a challenge because of the lack of archival documentation. In the South African context most of the archival resources that exist date from the period of apartheid, when multiple LGBTQI+ organizations were established to fight for the political rights of LGBTQI+ individuals. The LGBTQI+ movement in South Africa used the act of coming out to fight homophobic thinking and to gain legal and political recognition (Cameron, 1994). Coming out was, and continues to be in certain contexts, used by LGBTQI+ individuals to gain visibility for their sexual identities and the issues affecting them. This is true of some of my participants in my research, who viewed coming out as important because it allowed them to be able to resist homophobic ideas about LGBTQI+ identities. One of my participants, Kopano (27), commented that coming out means

speaking the truth about who you are confidently and not quietly because you own it and because it is just as much a part of who you are as anything else in your life. This allows for gay individuals to be visible and be able to fight for their rights.

Dineo (22) also highlighted the importance of representation in the act of coming out, by saying:

Maybe one day we will be at a point as a society where people don't have to come out, but right now I feel like it is important because it shows representation to young LGBT people that: 'Hey there are other people like me out there. There are some people that I can look up to reach out to and know that I am not alone. For me this was important in being honest about who I am.

Kopano's comment resonate with Samantha's, in that for both women coming out represents the idea of being authentic about their sexuality; but critically, Kopano speaks of coming out not being an act for yourself, but one which requires acknowledgement and a form of recognition from others to gain political rights. LGBTQI+ individuals living in the Global South use the act of coming out as a form of political resistance to the idea of non-heterosexuality being another form of colonialism and something that is not indigenous to the people in these countries (Gunkel, 2010; Nyeck & Epprecht, 2013). This is, of course, in contradiction to the views of other interlocutors in this study who reject this action that stems from the Global North. The example quoted above shows a different view on coming out from LGBTQI+ individuals living in the Global South. Even though this act is not native to individuals in the Global South, LGBTQI+ individuals still use it in claiming their sexuality.

Linking Kopano's view to Dineo's, the act of coming out is important as it creates the opportunity for queer individuals to no longer feel a sense of isolation because of their sexuality; they can begin to recognize others who are like them and hopefully begin to find a sense of community with others. Representation and visibility of marginalized groups remain critical, especially when the threats of violence and discrimination are present. Representation of queer

individuals has been important in enabling them to see themselves in others, particularly for young LGBTQI+ youth, some of whom have committed suicide because of the shame and isolation they feel because of their sexuality (Puckett et al., 2017). The act of coming out in relation to representation is a form of resistance to the idea of shame and guilt, but also an act of pride in seeing individuals who are claiming their sexuality and are living positive lives. The visibility of queer individuals has been critical in removing the idea of shame that has come with claiming this identity, and it has allowed for people to organize around issues affecting this community. The visibility of queer individuals allows for others to feel seen and hopefully they can build solidarity with each other and the experiences they have of being non-heterosexual.

Both Kopano's and Samantha's comments link coming out to an individual's emotional well-being, which has always been important to the idea of coming out; individuals no longer need to live in shame about their sexuality once they perform this act, and it can positively impact on their emotional well-being (Broad, 2011). A significant amount of research has indicated that some of the emotional anguish queer individuals, and specifically bisexual individuals, face is not only linked to misunderstanding of their sexuality but also to the issue of coming out and the difficulties a bisexual individual faces in undertaking this act (Brownfield et al., 2018; Chan et al., 2020). The act of coming out has been found to be positive for bisexual women, as they are able to gain social acceptance and integrate into their communities once they disclose their sexuality (Baiocco et al., 2020). For Samantha, coming out allows her to no longer live in shame, but rather have a sense of pride in being a queer woman and making the choice to love whom she loves. Kopano uses the word 'confidently' in describing what coming out means to her, and this indicates that this act allows her to not have shame, but rather to be secure in her sexuality and own it as part of her identity.

5.2.3 *Validity of bisexuality*

As mentioned earlier, the binary understanding of sexual identities (as hetero/homo) has resulted in the invisibility of sexualities that do not fit within this limited framework (Butler, 2006). For bisexuals, coming out is not only about claiming a non-heteronormative sexuality, but also represents a moment in which bisexuals can be explicit about claiming a bisexual identity and, importantly, asserting the legitimacy of bisexuality, which is different from other LGBTI+ identities. As discussed in Chapter 2, the ‘erasure of bisexuality’ (Yoshino, 2000) occurs through the binary understandings of sexuality (hetero/homo), as well as the misunderstanding of bisexuality which has allowed for its legitimacy to be questioned (Barker & Langdridge, 2008). Bisexuality has continued to be deemed not a valid sexuality, as it continues to not fit into the binary understanding of sexuality, gesturing rather towards a sexual fluidity, and requires a much broader approach to understanding sexuality (Butler, 2006; Valocchi, 2005). The selection of a romantic partner is critical for bisexual individuals, as it presents a particular sexuality to the outside world, usually a heterosexual or homosexual one. If a bisexual individual is in a relationship with an individual who appears to be of the opposite sex, they are assumed to be heterosexual. If a bisexual individual is in a relationship with a person who appears to be of the same sex, it is assumed that they are homosexual. The selection becomes crucial for bisexual individuals, as their own sexuality becomes invisible through this process if they are not directly asked how they identify (Hemmings, 2002). Bisexuality is rendered invisible because of this binary, even though bisexual individuals exist in these relationships. Historically in the LGBTQI+ movement in South Africa, bisexuality was acknowledged but did not receive the same attention as lesbians and gays in relation to social and political issues, and questions of legitimacy were always present (Chan-Sam, 1994). This type of thinking continues to this day, and it has made the process of coming out challenging for bisexual individuals.

Coming out is a tool that is deployed by the bisexual women I interviewed to claim and assert their bisexuality and make it real and legitimate. This is evident in Samantha's comment, as she is not only asserting her non-heterosexuality but is specific in claiming bisexuality while coming out and in advocating for its legitimacy through her existence. Coming out offers the opportunity for her to validate her sexuality, and it allows for ideas on sexuality to be questioned and to move beyond the binary understanding of it. This was highlighted by another participant, Lisa (34), who commented that

coming out is important for bisexual individuals because not only are you saying you are not straight, but you are bisexual which is different from being gay or straight.

Bisexuality indicates that you are attracted to more than one gender or non-gender-conforming individuals. It is important for people to understand that about bisexuality.

This was also reinforced by Sheila (29), who felt that coming out represented

coming out to yourself first and owning that and looking at yourself and saying I'm bisexual, this is my life, and this is the way I am, and I am happy to be this way.

Sheila's comment suggests that claiming her bisexuality has allowed her to experience positive emotional well-being. On average, the bisexual women interviewed who viewed coming out as important were women who were above the age of twenty-five. This highlights a difference in generational perspective on the act: for the older bisexual women, coming out is still a tool to validate their sexuality, whereas younger women under the age of twenty-five no longer view this act as necessary. This I believe is in part influenced by the fact that for some of my participants like Samantha and Sheila who were born before 1994 recognise that before this date being an LGBTQI+ individual was illegal, and they grew up in a period where that was not the

norm or it was just recently legal and therefore still new. For my participants who are under the age of 25, have had their entire lives living in a country that has had LGBTQI+ rights and for them it is seen as part of the fabric of the country and so therefore there is no need to come out.

For some of the bisexual women interviewed, coming out remains an important act, firstly because it has allowed them to move outside of the closet and gain self-acknowledgement and authenticity for themselves, which has translated into public authenticity in their everyday existence. Secondly, coming out has allowed these bisexual women to achieve positive emotional well-being, as it allows them to no longer feel shame about their sexuality, but rather claim it confidently as part of their identity. Coming out, particularly in the African context, remains important, as it is a tool that LGBTQI+ individuals can use to politically resist homophobia in their contexts and fight for political, social and legal recognition through their visibility, even though this is constantly challenged with violence. Lastly, coming out is significant for some of my participants as it allows for their identity to be visible through explicit naming and ownership of bisexuality, thereby asserting the validity of the sexuality. The claiming of bisexuality is critical, as it allows for nuanced ideas of sexuality to be discussed and for a shift away from the binary understanding of sexuality.

5.3 Challenges of coming out

5.3.1 Fear of rejection

Some of the bisexual women I interviewed recognized the importance of coming out, but also the challenges that come with this act. One of the main challenges that participants emphasized was the fear of rejection by family and friends. Previous research has shown how individuals have come out to friends and family and how they have experienced negative responses because of

this act (Knous, 2006). For bisexual individuals, the reluctance to come out has not only been about homophobia, but also about biphobic stigma (Scherrer et al., 2015). Bisexual individuals have commented that they have been called ‘promiscuous’, ‘selfish’ and ‘not serious when revealing their sexuality. This is fuelled by the misunderstanding of bisexuality (Barker & Langdrige, 2008) and the questioning of the legitimacy of bisexuality. Some of my participants I interviewed have not told their friends, but particularly their families, about their bisexuality, because they could face rejection and exclusion from their families. When I asked Tshepiso (27) if she had come out to her family, she had a difficult time articulating the following response:

My parents are Tswana and I envision how I'm going to come out to my parents. Nothing in the Tswana language will be able to fully articulate how I feel and who I am ... And I know that it is definitely not going to be what it was with my brother. It is not going to be like, okay, cool. My parents are in their sixties, so they really grew up in a different time... I do not know where to start. If there was someone in the family who was queer and out, I could use them, but there is no reference point and so this is going to be very difficult for me as I am expecting my parents to not understand. You know my parents sent me to private schools and they paid for me to speak English and I think in a certain way I have lost a lot of cultural stuff, right, and they might see this as Westernisation and think that I have adopted this white thing of being gay... I cannot say to my parents I am bisexual because they really won't understand, so maybe I might say I am lesbian, but even then, I know they will still not understand.

Tshepiso indicates the difficulties of coming out to African parents, who may be conservative and will not be able to accept her sexuality and will possibly blame it on her exposure to ‘white culture’ while attending private schools. This highlights again the idea that non-heterosexuality

is ‘un-African’ and another form of colonization that has infiltrated ‘black culture’ (Epprecht, 2004). Tshepiso highlights that her native language (Tswana) will not be able to fully capture how she describes her bisexuality, as this word does not exist in that language. This brings forward again the idea of coming out not being an act that is indigenous to African people, and how the paucity of documented language to describe queer identities reinforces the idea of it being ‘un-African’ and a Global North ideology. It also calls into question Global North sexual identities (LGBTQI+) that have been adopted in Global South contexts, and how the terms used do not fully describe queer sexualities in these spaces, as Global North LGBTQI+ ideologies continue to be the dominant discourse, usually expressed in English, through which queer identities are understood and disseminated (Dutta, 2012). Historically on the African continent, queer individuals did not use specific language to identify as LGBTQI+ individuals, but they experienced same-sex attraction and engaged in same-sex relationships (Epprecht, 2004; Miguel, 2021). In the Tswana language the word to refer to queer individuals is ‘*matanyola*’, which means anal sex and is used to describe homosexuals. Within the Tswana language, as in other African languages, there is no word to describe the concept ‘bisexual’, which creates the invisibility of bisexuality within queer relationships. Stewart (2013) found that in Tswana culture, same-sex relationships existed even before colonization; traditional chiefs recognized men who were in heterosexual relationships but still slept with other men. Thus, homosexuality was not viewed as an antithesis to heterosexuality. But unfortunately, this information and knowledge about the culture is not widespread, and so non-heterosexuality is viewed as ‘un-African’ (Stewart, 2013). The use of Global North language in describing non-heterosexual identities stems from the growth of research in those spaces, and also in the African context where, as mentioned earlier, it is a tool used to gain legal and political recognition. The use of

this language has been successful in gaining those rights, but it also has its limitations, since it does not consider contexts such as indigenous language, as shown by Tshepiso's comment. This has rendered Global South ideologies and languages concerning queer sexualities under-researched, invisible and therefore poorly disseminated (Browne, 2015; Dutta, 2012). Both the lack of documented African language terminology to describe queer individuals and the limited English language terminology that has been adopted reinforce the idea of non-heterosexuality not being indigenous to the African continent. This has an impact on bisexuality, as it becomes even further marginalized within non-heterosexual discussions.

A generational difference in perspective occurs in Tshepiso's comment, where the age of her parents is mentioned as a reason for them to possibly be less accepting of queer sexuality than younger individuals like her brother, who has been exposed to ideas of queer identities in various social settings such as school, social gatherings and other events. Research has shown that parents of LGBTQI+ individuals have responded negatively to LGBTQI+ individuals in various contexts (Baiocco et al., 2015). When bisexual women have come out to their families, it is younger family members who are more accepting and older family members who are not accepting of their sexuality (Wandrey et al., 2015). This has made it more difficult for bisexual individuals to come out to their older family members.

Religion continues to have a significant influence on whether or not individuals choose to disclose their sexuality because of the homophobia that they could potentially face. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many of my participants did not feel comfortable about their sexuality when they were younger because of the religious influences they were subject to while growing up. On the African continent, religion continues to be used as a tool to denounce homosexuality and all other identities which are not heterosexual (van Klinken & Chitando,

2016). This is evident in this comment by Mpho (35):

I believe that coming out for me is telling the people that I love that I love someone of the same gender or different gender or gender-non-conforming, but I have not told my parents yet as I don't think they will understand what I am saying and also, they are Jehovah's Witnesses.

This was also highlighted by Tshepiso (27), who commented that

I have just recently discovered my bisexuality so I am still figuring it out, but I am not sure if I will ever tell my parents. They are Christians and are very religious and so I know what feedback I will get, and I am not sure if I am ready to have that conversation just yet. Also, I will get the feedback that this is a Western thing, and it is not good for me.

5.3.2 Misunderstood sexuality

Mpho highlights a specific problem that makes her reluctant to come out to her parents: not only might they reject her because of their religious beliefs, but they might not understand what she means when she claims a bisexual identity. Bisexual individuals have been hesitant to disclose their sexuality because they know a narrow and negative definition of this sexuality exists; hence their reluctance to come out (McLean, 2007). When bisexual individuals are choosing to come out, they must consider how their sexuality will be misunderstood and possibly result in them receiving negative responses. This is evident when Babalwa (24) says:

I have told my friends that I am bisexual, but they understand that it means more than just attraction to the same gender but includes those who are non-gender-conforming. I

have told my siblings and cousins that I am a lesbian and that has made it easier for them to understand. I tried telling them I was bisexual, but they could not understand how I could like both men and women, so I was not even going to tell them I like those who are gender-non-conforming, it was going to be too much.

Babalwa highlights the difficulties that arise with coming out as a bisexual because the binary understanding of sexuality still persists (hetero/homo) and so it is easier to say she is a lesbian which is a form of stigma management in order to avoid the confusion. But even when she is claiming a bisexual identity, she recognizes that there are still limitations in how people understand bisexuality and so she chooses to not have the conversation as she fears misunderstanding.

Beth (28) reaffirms this idea:

When I tell people I am bisexual I say to them it means that I am sexually fluid. Saying this to people confuses them and they think I am promiscuous and having sex with everything and everyone. It is so frustrating, so I do not always tell people I am bisexual, I rather say I am queer, and I think they understand that better.

For Beth, the choice to adopt a queer identity allows for her to be acknowledged as non-heterosexual, which is better understood, but unfortunately does not allow her to claim bisexuality even though both bisexual and queer identities argue for a fluid understanding of sexual identities. Babalwa uses ‘lesbian’ to describe her sexuality and Beth uses ‘queer’. What is interesting to note is that both words indicate to others that they are not heterosexual, as compared to using ‘bisexual’. This shows the interchangeable manner of use of these terms to describe individuals who are not heterosexual, and how they are constantly shifting and changing

depending on the context and time. It shows how the fixed ideas we have of sexualities need to be reconsidered and allow for a fluid way of thinking which clearly is occurring but needs to be brought more into discussions when looking at sexuality studies.

For my participants quoted above, the reluctance to disclose is informed by awareness of the stigma management of a misunderstood sexuality, which they do not always want to do.

5.3.3 Fear of violence

A critical reason for participants' resistance to coming out is the threat of violence they could possibly face. Globally, LGBTQI+ individuals have faced physical violence because of their sexuality. South African LGBTQI+ individuals have legal rights that are enshrined in the Constitution, yet there are high levels of physical violence directed towards them. During the period 2012–2017, 35% of hate crimes in South Africa were perpetrated against lesbian and gay individuals (Shange, 2018). Both queer men and queer women face homophobia, but as MacKinnon (1997) argues, women's sexuality is defined by a male perspective that argues for the female body to be regulated and only engage in heteronormative romantic relationships.

Women who engage in non-heteronormative relationships challenge this idea, and the consequence of that has sometimes been sexual and physical violence (MacKinnon, 1997). In the South African context there are high levels of violence, particularly towards lesbian women or women who are in 'lesbian'-presenting relationships, but unfortunately statistics on this are very limited, as 88% of LGBTQI+ crimes are not reported by victims because they do not have faith in the judicial system (Collison, 2016). The threat of violence has therefore made queer women unwilling to come out of the closet. This is evident in the comment made by Lindiwe (21), who has only come out to specific individuals because for her,

I am out to my friends and some of my family, but I am nervous to be out in public because I fear the possible threat of violence especially as a black woman in this country.

Most of the crimes inflicted upon non-heterosexual women have been directed towards black women, mainly those living in the townships. These spaces still adhere to heteropatriarchal ideologies in relation to women's sexuality (Matebeni, 2011). The violence and these ideologies are not limited to townships, and black women living outside of these spaces have also experienced harassment or physical violence because of their sexuality (Wells & Polders, 2006).

Another participant, Pumla (26), said:

Coming out has meant coming out to myself every day and being like, you are not straight, but it means coming out to me and not out to the world... I feel like for me what is scary is there is the physical 'being out' in the world and I fear someone might hurt me, and I don't want to be shunned by my family because I know the views they hold, so I don't think I feel safe to come out to others.

For Pumla she is very aware of what it means to come out to her family and those outside of her personal space. In both instances there is a possible threat of rejection that can occur physically when she is in public and emotionally when she is telling her family. Pumla is clearly conscious of the rejection that could result in physical violence and therefore she chooses to come out to herself and keep it that way to protect herself. None of the white bisexual women in my study mentioned any fear of physical violence because of their sexuality, whereas half of the black women I interviewed (52%) mentioned fear of physical violence in public spaces because of their sexuality. One of the factors that fuelled this fear was the idea of 'being out' and people

recognizing their sexuality, especially if they were in ‘homosexual-presenting relationships’. This has made some of my participants reluctant to come out.

The violence inflicted upon women’s bodies illustrates the extreme form of heteronormativity that non-heterosexual women experience, and the constant pressure of women’s bodies to conform to heterosexuality (Gqola, 2015). And the physical violence directed specifically towards black non-heterosexual women indicates how black women’s bodies continue to be a site of violence (Bakare-Yusuf, 1999; Graziano, 2004; Mirza, 2009). In the South African context, the black female body has had a long history of being violated for the benefit of others, whether it was as a result of indigenous violence, colonialism, or apartheid. This has denied black women agency and subjectivity (as in the case of Sarah Baartman; see Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008; Matebeni, 2013) and this has influenced sexual identities, with the black female body continuing to be seen as a body to be used for others’ benefits and not for its own pleasure, which might lead to it facing acts of regulation in the form of violence (Gqola, 2015; Matebeni, 2013).

5.4 Rejection of heteronormativity.

Some of the bisexual women interviewed for my study did not see the relevance of coming out, and they rejected this act. These bisexual women believe that coming out still signifies the difference of non-heterosexuality in a negative manner that they do not want to adhere to, as well as a limitation of their sexual fluidity. For these women, coming out indicates that something is wrong with them, and that for them to be deemed ‘normal’, they must conform to this limiting act. This was emphasized by Lerato (21), who said:

I just do not think coming out should be a thing. I do not understand the concept of

coming out because heterosexual people don't have to come out. I was watching this move 'Love Simon' or something, where they were talking about coming out and how heterosexuals never come out. I just do not believe in it.

Lerato questions the idea of coming out from the standpoint of asking why heterosexuals do not have to perform this act to recognize their sexuality, but queer individuals must in order for their sexuality to be recognized. Queer individuals constantly must perform the act of coming out to others, while heterosexuals do not have to do this as it is assumed they are heterosexual. In questioning this act, Lerato highlights the idea of coming out being a heteronormative act and in many ways conforming to heterosexual ideas of sexuality. This highlights the significant influence that heteronormativity has in all spheres of society, and how individuals must make a conscious effort to resist this influence even with regard to their sexuality (Butler, 2006).

By choosing to not come out Lerato is resisting this heteronormativity, and her resistance can be viewed as a political act. Most of my participants who rejected the act of coming out were under the age of twenty-five. This indicates how younger people are viewing the act of coming out differently from the older bisexual research participants, but also how younger people are using different methods to reject heteronormativity and recognize their sexuality. The film *Love Simon*¹⁶ indicates how heteronormativity is being questioned in the media, and this signifies a form of resistance in the film space that has historically been dominated by heteronormative ideas of sexuality.

¹⁶ *Love Simon* is a US film about a teenage boy who has a huge secret that he keeps from his family, his friends and all his classmates: he is gay. When that secret is revealed, Simon must face everyone and come to terms with his identity.

Another respondent, Nomvula (21), also did not believe in the idea of coming out, because for her,

it makes me feel like I am othered, like I'm the other and so, straight people do not ever have to feel different, and they don't have to do it, it's always assumed and so for me, I have an issue with this. Why do I have to do that when straight people are given that courtesy of just never having to come out as straight. So, for me it is always just like, I love my identity, I'm okay with myself and so for everyone else it's just their own pot to brew. I will not come out per se because for me it feels like I am being further oppressed. I was never in the closet in the first place... you always have to do it [coming out] all the time and that seems exhausting and unfair to me.

For Nomvula the idea of coming out does not signify claiming your identity; it signifies being viewed as different from other people. Just like Lerato, she questions this act as a way to conform to the 'normal', heteronormative ideas of society, and she feels that performing this act will not make her 'normal' but actually othered. She challenges this by not coming out. She also questions the idea of coming out by saying she was never in the closet to begin with. Coming out assumes that queer individuals have been living in secrecy and shame by not claiming their sexuality publicly, and therefore they must engage in this act, which is not necessarily true for all queer individuals. Nomvula comments that if she were to perform this act, she would have to do it more than once to numerous people. The act of coming out has to be performed to different groups of people (family, friends, co-workers etc.) and for her, she feels that it would be too tiresome unfair because heterosexuals do not have to come out continuously. Nomvula has always claimed her sexuality, and so there is no need for her to engage in this act to gain approval from others and begin to claim her sexuality publicly. This questions the relevance of

coming out for queer individuals.

Another participant, Nabeelah (25), commented:

It is not really important to me. I just am who I am. I feel like coming out breeds the ground for a person to then box and categorize me, which I don't like, so I do not tell people I am not straight. Also, it is a very Western understanding of sexuality which I am currently thinking through and do not always agree with.

This comment by Nabeelah is important, because it questions the binary and limiting act of coming out for individuals who are not heterosexual. For bisexual individuals, the act of coming out is challenging, as the act represents a binary understanding of sexuality (hetero/homo) that does not take into consideration the fluidity of multiple sexual identities which do not fit into this binary act, and therefore bisexual individuals reject it (Craig & McInroy, 2014). For Nabeelah, coming out will mean that people will put her in the non-heterosexual box, which will limit her sexuality and not allow for her sexual fluidity, in this case bisexuality, to be recognized. She also raises the idea of coming out as a Western idea that may not be of relevance to her as an African bisexual woman. As mentioned earlier, the act of coming out has been questioned by Global South scholars as a Western idea that does not take into consideration the nuances of how sexuality is understood in post-colonial countries, in this case South Africa, where religion, race, class and geographical space have a significant role to play in regard to people's sexuality, particularly for black women.

As mentioned earlier, the generational shift about the idea of coming out indicates how younger people are viewing the act of coming out differently from their older bisexual research participants. The younger women I interviewed did not see the point of coming out, or resisted

the act because for them it held no purpose or relevance in claiming their sexuality. This was evident in the following comment made by Amanda (24):

I do not know if I have to come out. I do disclose to people if it is a topic of conversation, but it hasn't been something that I think is necessary or need to brand myself with in order for me to feel like I am bisexual.

This thinking is influenced by the fact that LGBTQI+ issues in South Africa are becoming part of mainstream politics, and there is more social acceptance of these issues and therefore no need to perform the act of coming out. It must be noted that the urban environment of Johannesburg has spaces for queer individuals to feel safe being 'out', specifically in the CBD or in suburban areas, and therefore individuals no longer deem it necessary to claim their identity in a political way as they have spaces that affirm their sexuality. This could be different for queer individuals living outside of these liberal urban spaces.

Some younger LGBTQI+ individuals are using different acts to claim their sexuality without having to constantly come out. Online platforms (YouTube, Tumblr, Reddit, etc.) and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) are being used by younger LGBTQI+ individuals as a way of coming out by using the internet to post videos or statuses in which they declare their sexuality and showcase their everyday lives and interests, instead of repeatedly having difficult face-to-face conversations.

5.5 Inviting in

As mentioned above, LGBTQI+ individuals are exploring new approaches in claiming their sexuality. One of the approaches that Robyn (28) mentioned was the idea of 'inviting in'.

She commented:

I do not believe in coming out, but rather 'inviting in'. Inviting in suggest that I don't owe you the right to tell you about my queerness, but rather I choose who to tell and when I do tell you I will not be held responsible for doing the work, but if you want to still be a part of my life, I invite you to do the work and accept me and my sexuality.

The idea of 'inviting in' suggests firstly a choice of whether to perform the act of coming out. Bisexual individuals do not have the obligation to come out as a way of being authentic in who they are; rather, the agency lies with them and whether they choose to invite others in by informing them of their sexuality (Johns, 2020). Secondly, the idea suggests a choice that an individual makes about whom to include in knowing how they identify sexually. This immediately puts the power in the individual's hands, and not necessarily in the hands of others (family, friends, colleagues, etc.) to accept who they are. They can still reject the individual, but it shifts some of the power dynamics in the individual's favour where historically the power of rejection and acceptance was held by those being disclosed to and not the individual who was engaging in the act.

The idea of 'inviting in' moves away from traditional ideas of disclosure about an individual's sexuality, suggesting instead a journey into understanding who the individual is and how it is they perform their sexuality (Moore, 2012). Lastly, the idea does not impose the labour on the individual to constantly validate their sexuality by asserting who they are, but rather shifts that work to those who seek to be in community with the individual, and asks these individuals to engage in reciprocal labour in order to be a part of the individual's community (Johns, 2020).

Robyn uses this approach when claiming her sexuality by making it clear that she does not owe

anyone the right to be informed about her sexuality; she is using her agency to choose whom she invites in by informing them of her sexuality.

This approach can be viewed as a different way of claiming a queer sexuality, one in which power is placed with the individual to choose whether or not to disclose their sexuality. There is no shame associated with choosing not to disclose one's sexuality, and individuals can still be emotionally well without ever disclosing their sexuality to others. For individuals living in contexts that are not accepting of homosexuality, Gopinath (2005) describes the action of 'staying put/staying in'. This action involves the individual choosing to not leave their former colonized homes or rural areas and migrate to liberal countries or cities, but rather to decide when and to whom they will disclose and negotiate how they express their sexuality in public. Both approaches are examples of how queer individuals are choosing whether, when and to whom they want to disclose their sexuality on their own terms, depending on the context.

5.6 Conclusion

The divergent perspectives on coming out discussed in this chapter indicate how it is still a relevant act for some of the bisexual women interviewed for this study, although its relevance and necessity are being questioned, not only by the bisexual women interviewed, but by LGBTQI+ individuals in general. The act of coming out allows for individuals to move away from shameful emotions about not being heterosexual, but at the same time this is not always necessary, as not all queer individuals are ashamed of their sexuality. The act of coming out offers the opportunity to advocate for LGBTQI+ rights, especially on the African continent, which is still an important act since LGBTQI+ rights are not the norm here on the continent. It

also seems to have prevalence in this present moment when anti-LGBTQI+ laws have come to the fore and become legal in certain countries. The act continues to be a way in which to challenge homophobic beliefs which could have legal consequences. At the same time, coming out exposes LGBTQI+ individuals to the threat of violence; this is especially true, in the South African context, amongst black non-heterosexual women. Coming out has allowed for some of my participants to validate their sexuality that has been invisible, but other participants still feel that it implies a limited, binary understanding of sexual identities that does not allow for a fluid understanding of sexuality to occur. For this reason, some of the bisexual women in the study disagree with and hence reject the act of coming out. Some of the younger bisexual women I interviewed question this act, as it is no longer relevant in their contexts. ‘Inviting in’ offers an opportunity for LGBTQI+ individuals to claim their sexuality on consideration of their contextual surroundings and whether it is safe to do so. This approach allows individuals to choose whom they inform about their sexual identity, thereby allowing them agency over their sexuality. ‘Inviting in’ offers a new language for how LGBTQI+ individuals can acknowledge their sexuality, one that is gaining in popularity.

Chapter 6: Spaces of Safety and Violence in Johannesburg

6.1 Introduction

According to the Merriam-Webster (2022) dictionary, a ‘safe space’ is ‘a place intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations.’

Having a space to express their sexual identity has been critical for LGBTQI+ individuals and communities. These spaces have allowed them to feel safe, share a common identity with others and move outside of the closet in expressing their sexuality (Matthijsen, 2018). In South Africa, both political and social spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals have historically faced significant backlash, not only from the government but also from heteronormative religious beliefs held by the rest of society (Cameron, 1994; Tucker, 2009). This backlash is particularly prevalent for black queer women; studies by Holland-Muter (2018) and Stephens (2018) researching black lesbian women and how they engage with public spaces in the main urban centres of South Africa show how these women are constantly aware of their behaviour in public spaces, especially in the townships, because of the threat of violence that black lesbian women have experienced. An example of this is the murder of Pinky Shongwe in Umlazi (a township in KwaZulu-Natal), who was killed by a man after rejecting his romantic advances while she was out in the town (Phungula, 2022). She was known to play in the local women’s soccer club, which some in the community did not approve of as they knew that a lot of the women in the club were lesbian (Phungula, 2022). LGBTQI+ spaces have made it possible for queer women to be able to express their sexual identity, but outside of these spaces issues of class, race and heteronormativity persist which makes it difficult for LGBTQI+ individuals to express their sexuality publicly without the repercussions of harassment or violence. For bisexual women

there is an added layer of having the validity of their sexuality questioned within these safe spaces in multiple ways.

In this chapter I will look at how the bisexual women I interviewed for this study interact with public and private spaces in the city of Johannesburg in relation to their sexuality. I will begin by unpacking the idea of safe spaces and discussing how these spaces have not been safe for women in both the private and public spheres. This has resulted in queer women creating spaces for themselves and others to socialize in and build community across intersectional identities. I identify the public spaces where these bisexual women feel safe to express their sexual identity, and describe how, even in these spaces, they still face challenges in expressing a bisexual identity. I analyse how the limited safe spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals in Johannesburg have resulted in threats of harassment and physical violence; I also discuss how the black women and white women I interviewed have had divergent experiences of violence and harassment because of their race, and how this has influenced the ways in which they negotiate their sexual identity in public spaces.

Lastly, I will discuss how the women have found safe spaces online, and how these spaces have been critical in building a positive common bisexual identity and legitimizing this sexual identity more successfully than happens in other traditionally safe spaces.

6.2 Safe spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals

Before looking at the safe spaces where my participants felt they were able to express their sexual identity and build community, it is important to look at the idea of safe spaces. The concept emerged through the absence of men in the women's movement during the late 20th century and was used by activists and in teaching communities (Kenney, 2001). It argued for a

safe space where marginalized groups would be able to feel safe in various private and public spaces. A safe space currently holds some of these values but is also a space for people to build community with each other and not feel afraid or apprehensive to express themselves or their thoughts in fear of retaliation that is harmful and sometimes violent. Historically, the home was viewed as a safe space, but this has been challenged by feminists, as women have experienced significant violence in this space (Fraser, 2014). This was made even more evident during the recent Covid-19 pandemic, when high numbers of cases of gender-based violence (GBV) were reported globally by women, girls and LGBTQI+ individuals as lockdown forced people to stay in their homes (Amnesty International, 2021; UN Women, 2020). This violence is influenced by patriarchy and the traditional heteronormative roles that women are expected to occupy in both private (home) and public (workplace, classrooms, community spaces, etc.) spaces.

Private spaces are not guaranteed spaces of safety for women, and therefore they have sought spaces outside of the home. The agency to occupy space in public areas has always been important to marginalized groups. Over time, feminists and queer scholars have used the concept of the safe space as a space for marginalized groups in both private and public spaces to be free from violence and harassment and build community with those around them (The Roestone Collective, 2014). Historically, occupation of public space by LGBTQI+ individuals has been critical in the movement for equal rights, and it has been a space where they can socialize and find common identity with others (Mkhize et al., 2010). In South Africa, occupying public spaces has been a challenge for LGBTQI+ individuals, as the apartheid-era Immorality Act of 1957 prohibited various categories of relations between people, including same-sex relations. This had an impact on how LGBTQI+ individuals engaged in public spaces, and they started to socialize in underground secretive spaces. In resistance to this Act a few gay organizations

mobilised against the legislation and restriction of movement at that time, but the membership of these organizations consisted mainly of white gay men (Cameron, 1994). Nonetheless, the restrictions created an underground movement of clubs, bars and bath houses that became a prominent subculture in the cities of Johannesburg and Cape Town during the 1970s and 1980s; but again, white gay men mainly occupied it. Even though homosexuality was present in other cities and in rural areas, it was in these two cities that 'public' LGBTQI+ spaces existed visibly (Cameron, 1994). White gay men had to navigate the challenges of the Immorality Act by having social gatherings, political events and sexual encounters in these underground spaces or in private homes located mainly in white suburban neighbourhoods or in the city centre (Gevisser, 1994). One of the main types of sexual encounter that was prominent for gay men in both cities was cruising,¹⁷ and this allowed them to be in a public space and express part of their sexual identity even though it was illegal to do so (Botes, 2021). White gay men benefitted from the patriarchal racial system, as although they were not legally permitted to engage in same-sex relations in public, the system allowed them to have some form of engagement in public through this activity. For white lesbian women the threat of being arrested was not as great, but there were no public spaces where they could socialize; therefore, they socialized in their private homes.

For black LGBTQI+ individuals, apartheid and the Immorality Act were double forms of marginalization, and occupying public spaces was incredibly challenging (Gevisser, 1994). For black gay men, the constant surveillance of their activities by the oppressive regime forced them to socialize in private spaces such as the suburban neighbourhood homes of white gay men. This was the case because in the townships where black people lived homosexuality was also frowned

¹⁷ Cruising refers to a concerted effort to find a sexual encounter with another person, especially in a public place.

upon, but the limited agency black gay men had to socialize with other gay men meant that they went into the cities to socialize with these men (Ratele, 2009). A consequence of this socialization was that homes were raided, and men were arrested on the streets if they were cruising. Both black and white gay men were arrested, but black men faced severe penalties such as a long prison sentence because of the racially oppressive regime (Cameron, 1994). In the case of black lesbian women, their ability to escape into the city to socialize in LGBTQI+ spaces was limited because of the Bantu pass they had to carry at all times;¹⁸ this pass was given mainly to black men working in the cities. black women struggled to obtain this document, even though some of them worked in the cities or in the private homes of white families as maids or cleaners (Walker, 1990). Black lesbian women were not able to move around without this document, and so they socialized in their private spaces where possible, while constantly being aware of the threat of violence that might come from the oppressive regime.

For both black and white lesbian women the ability to socialize in safe spaces in public has historically been a challenge, as these spaces were occupied mainly by white men, and therefore both groups sought community with other lesbian women in their private homes. This interaction has continued into the new dispensation and will be discussed further in this chapter in relation to a comment by one of my participants. In the late 1980s, lesbian and black LGBTQI+ organizations such as Lesbians and Gays Against Oppression (LAGO), the Organization of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA) and the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) were formed to create spaces for marginalized individuals living under apartheid. A significant aspect of these organizations was that they were formed outside of the suburbs and the city and included LGBTQI+ individuals of all the different race groups who were protesting

¹⁸ The pass was an identification document that allowed black, coloured and Indian people to move around in areas outside of their designated townships for work purposes.

the apartheid regime (Mkhize et al., 2010).

In the democratic dispensation, there are visible LGBTQI+ spaces across the city of Johannesburg where non-heterosexuals can socialize and build community. A challenge to these spaces is the high levels of violence that are inflicted upon women and girls in South Africa. The crime statistics show that in 2019/20, 53 293 sexual offences were reported, an average of 146 per day, up from 52 420 in 2018/19. Most of these were cases of rape (South African Police Service, 2020). In 2019/20, a total of 2 695 women were murdered in South Africa. This means a woman was murdered every three hours. Femicide is five times higher in South Africa than the global average, with South Africa having the fourth-highest female interpersonal violence death rate of the 183 countries listed by the World Health Organization in 2016 (Pilane, 2020). It must be noted that the reason for South Africa's high ranking is because it is one of the few countries that tracks GBV as compared to other countries with similar contexts that do not monitor this violence. Even with the context mentioned, the result of the high levels of violence has made safety in public spaces for South African women a matter of great concern, which translates into women being constantly aware of possible threats to them and in search of safe public spaces. Queer women face the double burden of searching for safe public spaces as women and as queer individuals. Even faced with these challenges, however, queer women and other LGBTQI+ individuals have found spaces to be in community with each other.

6.3 Class differentiation in queer-friendly public spaces in Johannesburg

When looking at how bodies socialize in space, Ahmed (2006) argues that bodies take the shape of the spaces they occupy. From the workplace to the private home, bodies orientate themselves to these spaces accordingly. Most spaces, both public and private, continue to be orientated

around heterosexuality. This heteronormativity affects an individual's sexual orientation, especially individuals who are not heterosexual. For queer bodies this presents a challenge, as these bodies are not the norm, and they are constantly confronted with situations that emphasize their differences. This challenge has been met by LGBTQI+ individuals creating spaces for themselves to socialize and build community with other LGBTQI+ individuals. The creation of these spaces has allowed LGBTQI+ individuals to be able to find a common identity, build relationships and even raise awareness of issues affecting them. As mentioned previously, in South Africa there has been a history of creating LGBTQI+ spaces, but in the new dispensation it is no longer illegal to be a queer individual in public. The enshrinement of legal rights in the Constitution has allowed for the establishment of LGBTQI+ public spaces in South Africa, but the occupation of these spaces has of course come with multiple challenges that LGBTQI+ individuals have had to contend with.

Many of my participants I interviewed said, when I asked them where they go out to socialize and have fun and build community with other LGBTQI+ individuals, that they go to Melville.

Pumla (26) commented:

I love going to Melville. I love going to Liquid Blue or Sixes and I feel really feel safe to express my sexual identity there... There are a lot of parties for black queer women there.

Melville is a suburb located west of the Johannesburg CBD. It is made up of residential homes and restaurants, bars and clubs that are not located in shopping malls but on public streets, mainly on 7th Street. This has made it a more inviting space for people to socialize than the shopping malls in the city. It is located close to the University of Johannesburg and the

University of the Witwatersrand, and therefore one will find many students in the area. Artists, scholars and activists are also known to meet up in the neighbourhood for different reasons. This has made Melville a bohemian neighbourhood where different individuals of multiple identities come together. The character of this neighbourhood is influenced by the fact that historically Melville was a suburb in which black and white individuals came together to build community in protest against the apartheid system (Bagnol et al., 2010). Melville was one of the few suburbs in which different races socialized and built community with each other, and this has continued post-1994. The multiracial and multi-class nature of this neighbourhood makes it a space for LGBTQI+ individuals to socialize, build community and raise awareness about the issues affecting them. At the same time Melville is a suburb that is constantly dealing with the worry of crime and theft as ‘anxieties around crime and safety are moral as well as practical (Falkof, 2022:154). The suburb is always in tension with being both a space of acceptance of different groups of people and a space where a constant vigilance must be adhered to for one’s own safety. However, even though Johannesburg has this history of being accepting of LGBTQI+ individuals, because it is a migrant city, the ability to build community and long-lasting bonds is constantly shifting and never permanent, specifically for LGBTQI+ individuals (Camminga, 2020). The result of this is that even though there are these spaces created for LGBTQI+ individuals, there is always the threat of transphobia and homophobia that rears its head from time to time as a way to regulate sexuality. This is also true for migrant transgender individuals, who experience precarity because of their foreignness and their sexuality (Camminga, 2020). There is always a threat of violence and harassment that is around for LGBTQI+ individuals and therefore certainty of safety is not always guaranteed.

Young adults from different classes and from urban areas are known to socialize in Melville.

Students have been known to explore their sexual identity while at university. This is informed by the fact that they are away from their homes and can therefore explore their sexual identity outside of spaces that are traditionally heteronormative (Rankin, 2005). This space for expression of sexual identity, as well as the bohemian nature of Melville, allows it to be a safe space for LGBTQI+ individuals in which they can be openly affectionate with their romantic partners. Pumla mentions the cocktail bar Liquid Blue, which is an LGBTQI+ bar that is mainly frequented by black LGBTQI+ individuals, especially black lesbians and feminine queer individuals. It is a space that has hosted many events for black queer women and has been used as an after-party venue for *Soweto Pride*, the annual event that is hosted in the townships of Soweto. Previous research has shown how Liquid Blue is a space for black LGBTQI+ individuals (Bagnol et al., 2010), even though it was not marketed as a queer space; its association with *Soweto Pride* as well as its hosting of lesbian and queer parties, such as *Open Closet*, has allowed it to be seen as a safe space for them. For Pumla, one of the reasons why Liquid Blue is considered safe is because it is a space mainly occupied by black LGBTQI+ individuals, specifically black queer women, and this offers her the space to express her sexual identity and not feel the threat of violence, as she is surrounded by other black queer woman and that provides a sense of safety.

Another participant, Kefilwe (26), also mentioned Liquid Blue as a place they frequent with friends:

I hang out a lot at Liquid Blue. It's the black club for all the gays and the lesbians. I know it can get grimy sometimes, but I do enjoy it. Its nice to be around other gay people and feel like nothing is going to happen.

Kefilwe, like Pumla, recognizes Liquid Blue as a space for black LGBTQI+ individuals to socialize, but they also mention the word ‘grimy’ to indicate that it is a space that is not always clean. When I asked them to further clarify what they meant by the word ‘grimy’ they commented:

Liquid Blue is a space mainly occupied by butch lesbians and mainly black gays and lesbians who just behave in not the best of ways and so the space just sometimes becomes too loud and a lot, but I still enjoy it.

Another participant, Babalwa (24), also commented on Liquid Blue:

I used to hang out at Liquid Blue, but that place is so ghetto.

Babalwa uses ‘ghetto’ to refer to Liquid Blue in a derogatory manner, just like Kefilwe uses the word ‘grimy’. In my own conversations with other LGBTQI+ friends and colleagues I have often heard of Liquid Blue being described in a derogatory manner by black LGBTQI+ individuals who are predominately from middle-class backgrounds, like Babalwa and Kefilwe. These individuals have referred to Liquid Blue as a place for the ‘hood gays and lesbians’, meaning that most of the LGBTQI+ individuals who socialize there are from the townships or behave in a manner that is not ‘proper’ and is inferior to their own behaviour. Maliepaard (2015) argues that when analysing spaces where LGBTQI+ individuals socialize, one must consider other social factors such as race, class and language, and how these will influence how sexual minorities engage in these spaces. The comments by Babalwa, Kefilwe and Pumla quoted above illustrate how class and race mediate the ways in which black LGBTQI+ individuals socialize in public spaces, even in ‘safe’ LGBTQI+ spaces, therefore raising questions about who these spaces are safe for, as class position still creates differences in views about how people should or should not

behave. In this context, a class divide occurs within the black LGBTQI+ community through social spaces, because even though Melville is a bohemian space for all to socialize in, especially LGBTQI+ individuals, class still manifests itself in this space.

Pumla also mentioned Sixes, a cocktail bar in the same area that is not an LGBTQI+ bar but is frequented by individuals of all races, classes and sexual orientations. In my own observations as a bisexual woman, and through my qualitative research, I have noticed that a lot of LGBTQI+ individuals who frequent Sixes feel safe to express their sexual identity in public there. One of the reasons for this is that some of the employees of the bar are LGBTQI+ individuals and are open about this in conversation with patrons of the bar. An example of this occurred on one of the nights when I went to the bar and observed one of the male waiters refer to a table he was serving as his ‘cuties’, agreeing with them and that he would say ‘yaaas darling’ in an exaggerated manner. These are mannerisms used by LGBTQI+ individuals to express their sexuality through language. I saw that the table also responded to the waiter with ‘yaaas darling’ if they agreed with something he said, and this made them all feel comfortable to use that kind of language without fear. This makes Sixes a space for LGBTQI+ individuals to be able to express their sexual identity.

There are other bars and restaurants in Melville that some of my white participants mentioned as places where they socialize. Beth (28) said:

I usually hang out at Hell’s Kitchen in Melville as well Anti-Social Club Bar. I feel safe to be out with my fiancée and not be afraid anything is going to happen.

Another participant, Jennifer (33), commented:

I really like hanging out in Melville. I find that it's a mix of people from different races and backgrounds. I also feel like it is a place where a lot of gays and lesbians hang out.

In talking more with Beth, she said that when she is with her partner, who is taller and more masculine than she is, she feels protected from any unwanted advances. For the white participants I interviewed, Melville is also a safe space for them as LGBTQI+ individuals to be able to express their sexual identity and feel safe. This was confirmed by Brooke (35), a non-South African, who said:

I have only been in Johannesburg for a few months before lockdown, but I really like Melville. I find that it has good restaurants and bars... I also like that it's a mix of people from different backgrounds and it seems like a queer-friendly space.

What is interesting to note is that unlike the black participants who commented on the class differentiation that occurs within certain spaces in Melville, the white participants did not comment on or even see this class aspect when it comes to certain spaces within Melville. One of the reasons for this is that the spaces in which my participants socialized are middle-class spaces and they are middle-class, and therefore they felt comfortable and did not have any concern. Another reason is that the multiple intersectional identities (race and class) of black LGBTQI+ individuals influence how they access, socialize in and build community within various neighbourhoods in Johannesburg, which is still spatially and economically segregated. This segregation has affected the two groups differently, as white LGBTQI+ individuals are not as limited in their access to public spaces and continue to not feel regulated because of the above factors.

6.4 Regulation of women's bodies in public and safe spaces

Another neighbourhood that participants highlighted as safe was Braamfontein. Braamfontein is located due north of the Johannesburg city centre, close to the University of the Witwatersrand. During the apartheid era it was an area for commercial development, but since the end of segregation it has become a multipurpose residential and commercial area for the people of Johannesburg.¹⁹ It is the fourth-largest office node in the city, and also a social node, since there are many bars and clubs in the area. It houses the Johannesburg City Council, the Johannesburg Theatre and the Wits Arts Museum, making it an administrative and a cultural space. My participants viewed the neighbourhood as a safe space to express their sexuality. Zinzi (29) commented:

I usually hang out in Braamfontein. Some of the places I go to are Kitcheners, Untitled Basement and Great Dane. I have been with a girlfriend and kissed her in Great Dane and was not afraid to do so... What was interesting is that the guys I was with questioned my sexuality and they were saying things like 'oooooh', and I could see that they were thinking of some threesome in their head with this girl I was with. That made me feel uncomfortable.

Tshepiso (27) commented:

I am always looking for queer safe spaces, especially for women, because those are very few. Braamfontein is a really safe space and so I hang out there a lot.

Sheila (29) commented:

¹⁹ See https://web.archive.org/web/20060513002006/http://www.braamfontein.org.za/show_article.php?articleid=87

I hang out a lot in Braamfontein. I find it is a bohemian space which is queer-friendly. I really love Kitcheners, and it is known to host Pussy Party for lesbians and bisexuals, and I am always there. I really enjoy those spaces as a lot of queer women are in those spaces. It's a safe space for queer women.

Just like Melville, Braamfontein is seen as a safe space, but the comment from Zinzi highlights the challenge for women, and in this case bisexual women, to express their sexual practices in public, as these practices are immediately fetishized through a male heteronormative gaze. Zinzi can sense that once she kissed her girlfriend in front of her male friends, she changed from being just a friend and became in their eyes a sexual object of desire. The use of the word 'object' is intentional, as the friends do not consider her own sexual desires and whether she would want to be in a threesome with them; only their own sexual desires as men are centred, and her desires are secondary. This attitude is informed by the idea of sexuality continuing to be viewed through a male gaze, with a man needing to be present in any sexual action involving a woman while the woman's desire is secondary (Rich, 1983). It also indicates how women's sexual desires must constantly be regulated, because when Zinzi kissed her girlfriend, to 'pull her back' into the heteronormative understanding of sexuality her male friends had to make comments that made her feel uncomfortable about doing so. I use the word 'pull' to highlight the forceful and non-consensual act that her friends inflict on her. Finally, when her male friends uttered the word 'threesome' they immediately questioned the validity of Zinzi's bisexuality. The validity of bisexuality is always being questioned, as it is not viewed as a 'serious' sexual identity (Flanders & Hatfield, 2014). One of the ways in which this is done is by assuming that bisexual individuals are looking to have threesomes with other people and cannot be monogamous with their partners, as in the case of Zinzi. The effect of this is to always questions the validity of bisexuality, but

also to set up a narrative that bisexual individuals are promiscuous and cannot be trusted in monogamous relationships (Klesse, 2011). This is a form of biphobia; it is something that all my participants have experienced and will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Both Tshepiso and Sheila highlight Braamfontein as a safe space, but Tshepiso also adds that she is constantly looking for spaces of safety as a woman, irrespective of her sexuality. As indicated by the statistics given in Chapter 5, the threat of violence against women in South Africa is very great, and this has made them conscious of the public spaces they occupy. LGBTQI+ individuals have always sought or created safe spaces to identify with others and express their sexual identity without the threat of harassment or violence (Maliepaard, 2015). Many of the black women I interviewed emphasized the importance and awareness of safety and how it is critical to them when they are in public spaces. This is influenced by the high levels of violence that black women are known to face in South Africa, especially black queer women because of their sexual identity (Judge, 2018). As seen previously in chapter 5 my black respondents were reluctant to come out especially in public spaces because of the threat of violence they could possibly experience. This was different to the responses of the white women I interviewed, who did not raise any sense of awareness of safety or emphasize the need for this when they are in public spaces. The violence inflicted upon white queer women in South Africa does not occur at the same rate as that experienced by black queer women. This violence is informed, as mentioned in previous chapters, by the idea of homosexuality being ‘un-African’, and the belief that one of the ways to cure this ill and make these women ‘fall in line’ is through violence and harassment (Mkhize et al., 2010). This type of thinking, combined with the high levels of femicide in South Africa, has translated into queer black women being constantly aware of their movements and behaviour and of the people around them when they are in public spaces.

Nomvula (21) commented:

I have never felt safe being openly affectionate in any space, if I have a partner. I know that I can't hold her hand or kiss her. Never! Never in public because whoa, the homophobia is terrible! I just could not do it.

Ayanda (25) commented:

I feel comfortable to express my sexuality with the people I am with but even in certain safe spaces I am not always comfortable because I never know who is listening or what might possibly happen.

Lisa (34), who is white, commented:

I am fully aware that I not only have class privilege but I also have white privilege and so I generally feel safe in public spaces, and I feel a responsibility to make the space safe for younger people.

Samantha (58), another white woman, commented:

I certainly do not feel there's any part of Joburg I couldn't go to. I feel safe to be in all public spaces.

Both Ayanda and Nomvula show how they must be constantly aware of their actions and behaviour in public spaces as queer women. For Nomvula, the homophobia that still occurs in South Africa and the high levels of violence inflicted upon non-heterosexual women mean that it is necessary to be conscious of how she expresses her sexual identity in public spaces, and she will not do anything that might bring attention to her and potentially cause her to experience

violence, hence her apprehension. As mentioned earlier, scholars such as Holland-Muter (2018) and Stephens (2018) highlight how black lesbian women engage in public spaces. Ayanda, for example, does feel safe to express her sexual identity, but only when she is with people she knows. She is aware that not everyone will be accepting of her sexuality, with the result that she is not completely comfortable to express it in public spaces. For black lesbians there is an extra calculation that they must make when expressing their sexuality. That calculation is ensuring that the spaces they are in are safe for them. This is especially true for lesbians who appear to be more masculine in their presentation and have a history of experiencing violence because of this (Holland- Muter, 2018). This highlights how queer black women must constantly regulate their bodies, as there is always a possibility of violence occurring.

Lisa's and Samantha's experiences of being in public spaces are different from those of black queer women; Lisa acknowledges that this is because her class and her race safeguard her from the threat of violence when she expresses her sexual identity. Samantha not only feels safe to express her sexual identity in public spaces such as her workplace and in social gatherings; she even asserts that she is not afraid to occupy any spaces in Johannesburg. This is not a thought or an experience that any of my black participants mentioned when discussing how they express their bisexual identity in public spaces. Their experiences are influenced by how, historically, public spaces for black LGBTQI+ women were prohibited, especially in the suburbs and the city (Tucker, 2009), whereas the Immorality Act did not restrict white queer women's movement and they did not have to fear the legal system. Tucker (2009) argues that the demarcation of public spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals was non-existent under apartheid, but white gay men were able to create or find public spaces for themselves such as bath houses and gay clubs. White queer women and LGBTQI+ individuals of colour did not have the same good fortune, and they had to

negotiate how they expressed themselves in public spaces. The difference was that white queer women would not be arrested if they were deemed to be in violation of the Immortality Act, whereas black LGBTQI+ individuals would be. As a result, since the end of apartheid black queer women are always aware of the public spaces they occupy, while their white counterparts do not have to be aware of these spaces because of their racial privilege, which translates into their bodies not experiencing the violence and harassment that black queer women experience. This has influenced how white women continue to engage with public spaces as there is no fear of a possible threat of violence because of their sexuality, as is evident in Samantha's comment. This is not to say that white women do not experience forms of homophobia or violence because of their sexuality but it is not reported or made visible at the same levels of black women. Race continues to have significance for how both groups of women engage with public spaces.

As mentioned earlier, all my participants were middle-class, but even with this privileged status the black bisexual women who participated in the research must still regulate and conscientize their bodies to be non-threatening in relation to their sexual identity in public spaces. I relate to this experience, as over the years I have been aware of how I express my sexual identity in public spaces irrespective of whether it is deemed a 'safe space'. The threat of violence is always present when you are a woman in South Africa, and the added layer of being a black queer woman has meant that my participants have trained themselves, as I have, to constantly be aware of their behaviour and actions in public spaces. Through their experiences of not always feeling safe in so-called safe spaces, my participants challenge the idea of safe spaces being siloed or immune from social factors such as race or class, which intersect with sexual identity and translate into differences between the racial groups and the agency of individuals in expressing their bisexuality.

6.5 Creating spaces for queer women.

Social events hosted around the city of Johannesburg were mentioned by participants as spaces to be in community with other LGBTQI+ individuals. There were very few such spaces, and on digging deeper into their responses, I found that the spaces for queer women only became even smaller in number. Questions of safety in public spaces must always be considered for these women, and some queer women have come together to create safe spaces for themselves through pop-up events.²⁰ As Karabo (22) commented:

I think what I have noticed is that it is really hard to find safe queer spaces as a woman and that you have to create those spaces and find yourself with people who are also trying to create those spaces otherwise it will always be a house party.

Another participant, Robyn, (28) commented:

There are many parties that happen in Maboneng²¹ for queer individuals. Before lockdown I would attend Pussy Party in Maboneng and Braamfontein as well as 'Same Sex Saturdays'. These events used to happen every three months or so and it is a safe space for queer women to come together and have fun.

In my research into LGBTQI+ bars and clubs in Johannesburg, what I found was that there are more permanent gay bars for men than lesbian or bisexual bars for women. Examples of the gay bars and clubs are Beefcakes, Babylon and Trouble Bar. This does not mean that these spaces are

²⁰ Pop-up events are temporary, unexpected events in unique spaces. For the LGBTQI+ community these events are usually held in public spaces (bars, hotels, clubs, art galleries, etc.) around the Johannesburg CBD. They take place once a month or every three months, depending on who is organizing the event. These events have grown more frequent around the city, but they do not occur weekly and sometimes, depending on the finances of the organizers, do not occur.

²¹ Maboneng is a neighbourhood in downtown Johannesburg.

not welcoming for other LGBTQI+ individuals, but when I was socializing and observing individuals in these spaces, I found that white gay men mainly occupied them. When trying to locate lesbian bars and clubs I found only one bar, Priscilla's, which is a drag queen bar that does cater for lesbian women but not every night. All the abovementioned bars and clubs are located in Illovo, a predominately white, middle- to upper-class neighbourhood in Johannesburg. This neighbourhood is called the 'pink neighbourhood', referring to it being an LGBTQI+-friendly space. It is a sought-after neighbourhood for many young professionals and creatives because of its proximity to the business centre of Sandton and to residential apartment blocks. A comparison of LGBTQI+ nightlife in this neighbourhood can be made with gay nightlife in India, as researched by Khubchandani (2020) and documented in his book *Ishtyle: Accenting Gay Indian Nightlife*, which explores the gay night scene in India and shows how the exclusionary, unequal systems of gender, caste and class play out in the LGBTQI+ safe spaces there, and how gay men are catered for, rather than other queer individuals, through dress codes that cater mainly to gay men's desires and exclude others. I believe the same type of interaction occurs in the gay bars. In my observations while attending some of the gay bars and clubs in Illovo, one of the most obvious forms of inequality I noted in these spaces was gender. There were many more men in these spaces than women, and even when comparing these spaces to Melville spaces, gay men were dominant. In some of the clubs and bars in Illovo it was evident that these spaces were trying to attract gay men. On one of the nights when I went to Beefcakes, the theme of the party was 'Sunshine in the Summer', to celebrate the beginning of summer in Johannesburg. The cover charge was R150, and I observed a lot of gay men dressed in small briefs or trunks, many of them not wearing shirts. There were some women in the club who were dressed in shorts and T-shirts that covered them up. A few women wore bikini tops, but that was minimal compared to

the men wearing trunks and no shirts. Around the club, servers were dressed in small briefs, and I noticed that they all had clean-shaven, toned bodies. This is consistent with other LGBTQI+ clubs I have gone to in Johannesburg and in Cape Town, where the male waiters and bartenders are usually good-looking, clean-shaven, muscled or toned individuals.

The dress code is intentional in favouring a certain type of desirability of a body, usually a white cisgender gay man. Horton (2020) argues that a policing of bodies occurs in queer public spaces to reproduce the norm in society. This occurs through queer spaces favouring certain bodies (i.e. masculine bodies) and particular dress codes that reveal the ideal body in a flattering way. This is significantly influenced by the heteronormativity that historically has preferred white, cisgendered male bodies as the ideal. In Illovo, even though these clubs and bars market themselves as being open to all queer individuals, it is evident that some of them are still spaces that favour white gay men and produce a hierarchy of male cisgender bodies at the centre and other bodies at the margins of these spaces. This illustrates how even in safe spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals the centring of white men continues, which highlights how race and heteronormative roles influence LGBTQI+ spaces (Fox & Ore, 2010).

In Illovo, black LGBTQI+ individuals do socialize in the bars and clubs in the area, but these tend to be middle-class individuals. Most of the black LGBTQI+ individuals I observed and had informal conversations with were tertiary-educated professional individuals who either lived in Illovo or could afford to be in the clubs and bars in this neighbourhood. The affordability of these spaces creates a class divide whereby, again, only a certain type of individual can access them. The spatial segregation of apartheid continues to influence how sexualities are orientated in different spaces (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009) and this is evident in how a predominantly black middle-class LGBTQI+ cohort socializes with white LGBTQI+ individuals in Illovo, while in

Braamfontein and Melville, LGBTQI+ individuals of all races and classes socialize together and face the challenges present in these spaces. The intersections of race, class and gender reproduce themselves in LGBTQI+ nightlife and in other public spaces. This reproduction then creates a hierarchy where certain individuals are able to access some public spaces and others are not.

Given the above exclusionary settings, queer women have created pop-up events that are curated with LGBTQI+ women or femme individuals in mind. Examples of this, as mentioned by Robyn, Karabo and earlier by Sheila, are events that are held in bohemian spaces in the city and beyond the suburbs. *Pussy Party* is an ‘incubator’ and collective affirming space for queer individuals, women DJs and club culture in Johannesburg (Faku’gesi, 2019). It was originally founded in 2016 as a space for femme and queer DJs to nurture their talent by performing in monthly club sessions, but has gone on to be a space that ‘advocates for a community of artists of all genders who are pro-pleasure, prioritizing self-love and a safe space for femme and queer women’ (Faku’gesi, 2019). The parties are attended by individuals of all races, but mainly by black queer women between the ages of 18 and 34. They are hosted around the city of Johannesburg in bars and clubs, which has made them more accessible to women from all economic backgrounds (since the ticket prices are not higher than R100) and allowed them to not feel alienated from the space. Having *Pussy Party* events in the city allows for race and class barriers to be removed and provides a space for individuals with multiple identities to feel comfortable socializing together. All my participants who mentioned *Pussy Party* spoke about it in an affirming manner, not only of their sexuality but also of their race and class. Sheila (29) commented:

I actually enjoy Pussy Party because the event is usually somewhere in Braam or in town and you get to be around a lot of black gay women and queer individuals and I really enjoy that about their events because you get a lot of black people who are students,

*grungy or rich lesbians from the north.*²²

The fact of *Pussy Party* being a space for women from different backgrounds was highlighted by participants. In my observations I have also found it to be a space that does bring together a lot of black LGBTQI+ women and queer individuals from different classes. *Pussy Party* is also one of the few LGBTQI+ spaces that is described as ‘a progressive femme-friendly event in Johannesburg that hopes to carve out a safe space where women and femmes can express and celebrate their femininity in whichever way they want’ (Bogatsu, 2016), meaning that it is accurate in advertising itself as a space for queer women or femme individuals. The events initially happened monthly, but over time they have occurred every second month. They are held in spaces such as Great Dane (a club), AGOG Gallery (an art gallery in Maboneng, in the Johannesburg CBD), Toasted (a restaurant) and Kitcheners (a bar). There is usually no entrance fee for women, but sometimes the venue might require an entrance fee. The events are usually centred on up-and-coming femme or women DJs playing a music set, and queer women and femmes come together to dance and socialize with each other. Before the pandemic occurred, I attended a few of the parties and spoke to one of the organizers. I asked why the parties had decreased to every second month. The organizer replied that unfortunately as a team²³ they could not afford to host the parties every month without incurring a financial loss, so they had to host them every other month. This is quite different to the permanent spaces in Illovo such as Babylon and Beefcakes, which can host events not only monthly but weekly in their permanent spaces. This highlights the difficulties queer women have in accessing financial resources to create and sustain spaces for themselves, but also how public spaces are being used differently

²² ‘The north’ refers to the northern suburbs of Johannesburg.

²³ *Pussy Party* is organized by Phatstoki and Rosie Parade. Both are queer women living in Johannesburg who host the event around the country.

by these women, shifting from permanence towards a flexible approach. This flexibility was helpful during the pandemic, as the events were hosted online on Instagram, which allowed them to still occur when face-to-face events were not possible.



Figure 1: A flyer for a *Pussy Party* event hosted at Kitcheners bar.

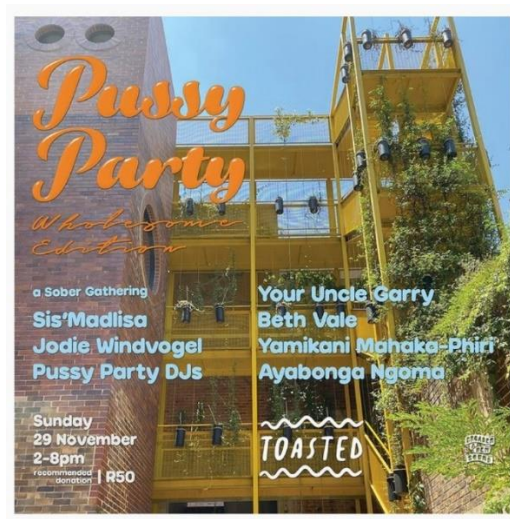


Figure 2: A flyer for a *Pussy Party* event hosted at Toasted restaurant.

Same Sex Saturday is another pop-up space that ‘curates queer experiences’ for LGBTQI+ individuals (Perfect, 2017). It was founded by Andiswa Dlamini in Durban, and the idea behind

the events was to create ‘a safer space for the queer community to just enjoy and learn from each other’ (jhblive, n.d.). The space hosts parties and dinners catering for black LGBTQI+ youth, but is open to all individuals of different ages, races and sexual identities. It has an entrance fee of between R100 and R150 (Perfect, 2017). *Same Sex Saturday* started in Durban but has grown and is now also held in Johannesburg. In Johannesburg, the events are held mainly at different locations within the city such as the AGOG Gallery in Maboneng and the rooftop of the Reef Hotel. One of the *Same Sex Saturday* events I attended was hosted at the AGOG Gallery, which is a space for young contemporary artists to display their works, but also an event space. The youthful artistic focus of the gallery allows it to be a space for LGBTQI+ individuals to host events. At the event I attended, those present were women from different races and different classes of LGBTQI+ individuals from around the city. Some of the women I spoke to identified as cisgender, while others identified as transgender women who viewed *Same Sex Saturday* as a safe space. I spoke to one of these women (Partygoer X) and she said:

I just love that it is a space for women by women and queer individuals. We are creating our own spaces, and we feel safe in them.



Figure 3: A flyer for a *Same Sex Saturday* event.

Again, the idea of celebrating safe spaces for women is highlighted, but also how queer women are creating safe spaces for themselves to socialize in and are not waiting for others to do it for them. It must be noted that both pop-up events described above are organized by black and white queer women, who have been deliberate in creating spaces and hosting events around the city to which all queer women and femme individuals can have access and where they can feel comfortable. What I found interesting in my observations is how intentional the space has been created for these two groups of people and at the same time it is open to having others (i.e. gay masculine men and others) in the space as long as they recognise that the space is catered towards the above-mentioned groups and that will not change. This for me shows how they are intentional about trying to be inclusive of all LGBTQI+ individuals while centring queer women.

Queer women have also used private spaces to build community, by having dinners and private parties in the homes of friends or their families. Earlier Karabo commented that the difficulty of finding safe public spaces for queer women has resulted in her attending more house parties.

This brings to the fore how LGBTQI+ individuals, especially queer women, use private space to socialize with other queer women. Robyn (28) commented:

One of my friends has created a space in which she hosts queer events at her house.

People usually come through to watch queer films or have queer artists perform and then there is a discussion on the films or with the artist. This space has been great for me in meeting other queer individuals in Johannesburg.

Historically under apartheid, white and black lesbian women socialized in the homes of other lesbian women or queer individuals to avoid being arrested because of the homophobic and racist laws in South Africa (Gevisser, 1994). Even though the laws against homosexuality have been removed post-apartheid, the high levels of violence that are inflicted upon women, specifically queer women, have increased. As seen in the earlier comments of my participants, the constant awareness of safety in public spaces has in some instances resulted in queer women socializing in private homes with other queer individuals, or building community with those outside who are not queer; this allows for the threat of violence to be minimized as queer women feel safe in the private homes or with people they know. Livermon (2012) terms this work ‘cultural labour’ (i.e., talking and building community in a reciprocal manner with neighbours by knowing who they and their families are, so that you are not viewed as different or a threat to them) which is a practice in which queer individuals challenge the multiple forms of prejudice and homophobia by building community with other queer individuals or those who are their allies. In my research I found that most of my participants who favoured socializing in private homes were individuals in relationships, or individuals over the age of twenty-five who did not always want to be in clubs or bars. Lisa (34) commented:

I don't always want to go out to restaurants and clubs. I mean I am in my thirties, what am I doing in a club? So, I like to have my friends over and have dinners or watch movies with each other. I find it cheaper and also it eliminates any issues we might have as queer women if people have looks or if they might do anything.

Another reason for women socializing and building community in private spaces such as the home is because, as mentioned earlier, LGBTQI+ public spaces, especially those for lesbian and queer women, are limited. Women constantly face the threat of violence and harassment in public because their bodies are viewed as objects to be acted upon without consent. Combined with the heteronormativity that persists in South African society, queer women are constantly challenged in expressing their sexual identity in public and therefore are regulated in their performance of their identity. The private home allows queer women to be able to express their sexual identity without fear, build community with others, and create safe spaces for each other. It must be noted, though, that this is contingent on the private home being a safe space. As mentioned earlier, the home is not always a safe space (as seen in the high number of cases of GBV during the Covid-19 pandemic). Therefore, in order for queer women to feel safe in the home, they usually must have financial resources to create a space for themselves and for others.

6.6 Safe spaces online

Another safe space that has been created for LGBTQI+ individuals is online, which has opened up for individuals to socialize, learn, explore and express their thoughts. This has translated into the internet playing a crucial role in identity development for some marginalized sexualities and gender youth (DeHaan et al., 2013) as it is an affirming place. Online affirmation has grown to include all LGBTQI+ individuals claiming their sexual identity openly, as mentioned in the

previous chapter, but this space has also been helpful in enabling individuals to establish friendships and build networks with others. One of the online groups I joined for my research was AmBi, a global group that describes itself as ‘a space for visible, proud, and unapologetically bi community’ (AmBi n.d.). The group is open to bi-allies as well, but centres itself as a space for bisexual individuals. Since it is a global group, it has multiple chapters online (through a Facebook group), and one of them is in Johannesburg. This chapter meets up in various parts of Johannesburg and hosts a range of activities, such as attending art exhibitions, having picnics, holding discussions online, or going out for drinks as a group. After being screened and being accepted into the group, I was able to have online and face-to-face conversations with other bisexual individuals. During some of the gatherings I attended it became apparent to me how important some of my fellow bisexual individuals found this chapter to be. One of my participants, Mpho (35), whom I met through this group, spoke of how important the group was for her:

I really love going to the AmBi events a lot. I think it is such an important space for bisexuals and just bisexuals. We don't have a lot of those in the queer space so to be around others who are like you is so meaningful and helpful to me.

For Mpho, having a space such as AmBi has not only affirmed her sexual identity, but provided a space where bisexuals are at the centre of the group, in a space exclusively curated for bisexual individuals, which she finds important. Barker and Langdrige (2008) have highlighted the invisibility that bisexual individuals face within the LGBTQI+ community. This is mainly because bisexuality is not viewed as a legitimate sexual identity, as it does not fit into the hetero/homo binary. This illegitimacy then produces a form of invisibility of bisexuality and is reproduced in LGBTQI+ spaces, where there are very few spaces that are for bisexual

individuals. The creation of AmBi challenges this invisibility by claiming a public space for bisexual individuals that affirms their sexual identity and creates a space of validation for them.

Beth (28) also highlighted the importance of the online space for her as a bisexual individual by saying:

I have found that in some of the bars, clubs or with other gay friends I hang out with, they will question my sexuality and sometimes say I am a lesbian even though I have said I am a bisexual... I really enjoy watching videos on YouTube and Facebook that really show bisexuals in a positive light which is important for me.

Beth highlights Yoshino's (2000) argument about the multiple forms of erasure that a bisexual experiences both in public spaces and in so-called safe spaces with other queer individuals.

Within both spaces, a bisexual woman's sexuality is questioned from a heteronormative perspective, and then is erased and translated into a limited (lesbian) understanding of sexual identity. For Beth, the online space is a refuge from this form of erasure and allows for her bisexuality to be validated without negative connotations.

One of the most used online spaces is social media, and some of the biggest social media platforms used are X (formerly known as Twitter), YouTube and Instagram. As mentioned in Chapter 4, LGBTQI+ individuals have used the online space to come out and build community with other LGBTQI+ individuals. This is critically important for LGBTQI+ individuals who may not have disclosed their sexual identity to their own family and friends, as the online space allows them to be honest about their identity, share with others online and build potential friendships and networks with other LGBTQI+ individuals. For some of my participants who had not come out, the online space was incredibly important as it allowed them to be open about

a part of themselves, which they could not do physically with family and friends. One of the spaces that most of my participant mentioned was Twitter. Amanda (21) commented:

I really enjoy using Twitter and I follow people who are queer or who are bisexual. I actually have built friendships, and we talk about stuff I guess that I cannot talk or ask my family about.

Another participant, Lindiwe (21), also uses Twitter to follow queer individuals:

There's a bunch of people I follow on Twitter who are part of the alphabet gang²⁴... I think social media is where I get the most support. It's the place where I've gotten the most indirect and direct support.

When I probed Lindiwe further on the different types of support she gets, she mentioned the following:

I think for me I will ask them questions about anything queer and they give me advice, but also, I think seeing other people being queer or bisexual shows me I can do it as well. For me coming from a conservative Christian household it is very difficult to speak on my sexuality, so it is always good to get this type of support.

For younger LGBTQI+ individuals, online spaces such as social media have provided a 'safe space' to be able to express their sexual identity, as they are not able to have that in physical spaces (Lucero, 2017). This has resulted in a significant part of their lives existing online. Craig and McInroy (2014) have argued that online spaces have become safe spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals to form a part of their identity, as seen in the comments of both Lindiwe and

²⁴ Alphabet gang refers to individuals of the LGBTQI+ community and the first letters used to describe the different sexualities

Amanda, as Twitter is a space that allows them to be able to learn, discover and share experiences and knowledge about their sexual identity, which they cannot do with their families.

Another social media space that was mentioned was Instagram. Participants mentioned using this platform to communicate and share important information with other LGBTQI+ individuals.

Jennifer (33) mentioned how she specifically follows bisexual individuals on Instagram. She commented:

I actually do follow bisexual individuals or groups on Instagram that are for bisexual people. I like seeing people who are openly bi and have the bi flag as their profile photo or they post stuff related to queer information. Like one posted about what it means to be bisexual and the different meanings, and then she posted where trans individuals can get their hormone shots. I like sharing that kind of information.

The importance of representation in public spaces has been noted as a positive factor in identity development. For Jennifer, seeing bisexual individuals on her Instagram feed has had a positive effect on her not only in terms of representation, but also in terms of understanding what bisexuality is and moving away from the misinformation about this sexual identity. This form of representation is important for LGBTQI+ individuals who, in using the online space, see themselves represented in a positive manner in different contexts, which can shift the stigma or their negative perception about their sexual identity (Mainardi & Pavan, 2020), as it does for Jennifer. Social media has also become a space of sharing news and critical information and raising awareness about numerous issues affecting LGBTQI+ individuals (Fox & Ralston, 2016). Jennifer, like other LGBTQI+ individuals, has used the numerous online public platforms to share news and information relating to her that may not be disseminated on traditional

communication platforms (e.g., television news, newspapers, etc.).

Amongst my participants who did mention online spaces, I observed how when speaking of these spaces and the people they follow, a sense of warmth came over their faces. This was especially true for participants who had not disclosed to their family or some of their friends. The online space was a ‘safe space’ for them to be able to share and express their sexual identity.

Amanda commented:

I remember when I was younger, I told my mom about me liking both girls and boys and she discouraged me against it. I have not told her that I have dated men and women as I know she will not approve. I don't share that with her or my family, but I do have friends in person and online who I share with.

Nabeelah (25) said:

I am from a Muslim household, and I know I can't talk to my aunt about this stuff. She just wouldn't understand, and I don't have energy for that. I usually share and tell my other friends, or I share on my Facebook groups that I am a part of.

The online public space has become not only a space for individuals to share and network with each other, but an important communication tool to build community, educate, raise awareness and create safe spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals to be able to share and express their sexual identity.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has described the private and public spaces that my participants socialized in to

build community, raise awareness and have fun with others. In the many different public and private spaces participants engaged in, their multiple intersectional identities came to the fore. These identities shape where and how they express and perform their bisexual identity. For women living in South Africa the threat of violence and harassment is prevalent in both public and private spaces, and this has forced women to regulate their bodies in public so as to not be viewed as potential victims. This is, of course, in contradiction to the rights that have been won for LGBTQI+ individuals to express and claim their sexuality in public and private spaces. There continues to be a negotiation of race and class for black queer women in public spaces; other queer women have challenged this by creating spaces for each other. These spaces have been created to reimagine the public space as a space to foster community and socialization, where all marginalized LGBTQI+ individuals are centred and not confined to the margins. However, within these spaces some of my participants have still faced forms of biphobia, violence and a regulation of their sexuality. It must be noted that my research revealed how the ways in which black and white bisexual women expressed and performed their sexuality differed, as the white bisexual women were able to benefit from their race and class identities, in relation to which the threat of violence was not as high as it was for black bisexual women. But the constant delegitimizing of bisexuality still occurs for white women as well as for black women. This has forced the bisexual women involved in my research and other LGBTQI+ individuals to use the online public space as another safe space to socialize, build community and raise awareness with other LGBTQI+ individuals. For my participants, especially the younger ones, the online space has been important in building community. For other participants, the online space has been important in finding community and in seeing representations of other bisexual individuals that may not be present in their offline lives.

Chapter 7: Biphobia, Stigma, and Sexual Violence and Harassment of Bisexuals

7.1 Introduction

The violence and harassment that LGBTQI+ individuals have experienced globally and on the African continent has been documented over the past few decades, as referenced in previous chapters. This documentation has not properly shown the extent of the violence, as LGBTQI+ individuals have not always reported it. This is because in some countries being queer is illegal and therefore there is no way to access justice. In countries where legal rights have been afforded to LGBTQI+ individuals, access to justice continues to be a challenge as negative ideologies and stigmatization of LGBTQI+ individuals persist, making it difficult to obtain the full justice desired (Hussain, 2020). When looking more deeply at the analysis of the violence inflicted, what also becomes clear is that the focus has been on violence against lesbian and gay individuals and recently against transgender individuals. Not enough attention has been given to the forms of violence that other queer groups face, in this case bisexual women.

This chapter will look at the multiple forms of discrimination that my participants faced in relation to their sexual identity. The chapter will argue that bisexual individuals experience a specific type of discrimination that is different from the experiences of other queer individuals or groups. I will show how this violence comes from both within and outside LGBTQI+ spaces. It is informed by the non-binary identity that bisexuality occupies, which poses a challenge to the norm of how sexuality is understood, creating friction and difficulties for bisexual individuals in expressing and disclosing their sexual identity. The chapter will look at my participants' experience of this violence and how this has shaped their identity. Finally, the chapter will go

into detail about the experiences of violence and harassment that my participants have had, and how these experiences speak to the experiences of cisgendered women in general in South Africa.

7.2 Multiple forms of bisexual discrimination

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, bisexual individuals experience multiple forms of discrimination that come from various spaces and individuals in society. For my research participants, this discrimination has come from friends, family and other queer individuals too. This form of discrimination is called biphobia. Biphobia is defined as a form of prejudice and dislike for individuals who identify as bisexual (Weiss, 2011). It expresses itself through sets of stereotypes that constantly question the legitimacy of bisexuality (Rust, 2000). One of the reasons why this phobia occurs is because of the monosexism that exists in society which presumes that an individual can only be attracted to one gender, creating a binary understanding of sexuality (Roberts et al., 2015). Bisexuality challenges this binary, and the response to that has been discrimination, harassment which is reflected in ways of thinking, and the delegitimisation of it. The result of this has been that bisexual individuals doubt themselves and form a self-hatred about their sexuality, because of the biphobia and their sense of dislocation from both the heterosexual and homosexual communities. Some bisexual women have questioned their identity and resisted the label of bisexuality, as they fear the phobia (Borver et al., 2001). All my participants said that they experienced some form of biphobia when discussing or disclosing their bisexual identity. Nabeelah (25) commented:

I have been called a double adapter ... Also, I have been told that I'm greedy and that I am confused.

Pumla (26) commented:

My experience of biphobia is that people will say that I'm greedy and why do I have to like both men and women? Are there not enough women for me to like instead of men?

The use of the derogatory term 'double adapter' indicates the idea that because Nabeelah is bisexual, she can be in a relationship with both men and women. This speaks to the idea of bisexuals being easily adaptable and switching between liking males and females, and not being 'stable' in whom they like. This has led to the idea of bisexuality being linked to the idea of mental instability, as it is thought that bisexuals cannot 'choose a side'. The discrimination that Nabeelah mentions comes from not fully understanding the fluidity of bisexuality, and it seeks to reinforce the binary concept of sexuality by using derogatory words. However, a few of my participants, especially those who were younger, did experience some positive feedback when disclosing. Amanda (24) commented:

So far, the people who I have told have been cool with it [her sexual identity]. I have only told my friends or close people though as I don't know about my family and older people.

The positive feedback is informed by the way in which younger people are not limited to the hetero/homo binary, and give themselves permission to explore and experiment with their sexuality (i.e., being queer, pansexual²⁵, etc.) (Galupo et al., 2018). A shift has occurred over time, with younger LGBTQI+ individuals challenging historical ideas of how they should or should not behave; this could be seen in the previous chapter on coming out, where younger

²⁵ Pansexual refers to a person who is sexually, emotionally, romantically, or spiritually attracted to others, regardless of biological sex, gender expression (of masculine or feminine characteristics), or sexual orientation (Sprott & Benoit Hadcock, 2018)

participants did not feel the need to disclose while older participants still felt the need to do so and the importance of disclosing their sexual identity. As LGBTQI+ issues are discussed more in public spaces and more people are accepting of these identities, younger LGBTQI+ individuals have space to explore their sexual identity and not be constricted by the binary.

Nabeelah and Pumla both mentioned the word ‘greedy’ in their comments. This is one of the most frequently used negative words to describe bisexual individuals and comes from the assumption that bisexual individuals do not want to choose between the genders and would rather be in relationship with all genders, which is viewed as selfish (Boyer & Galupo, 2015). This way of thinking is a form of monosexism as it assumes individuals will only be attracted to one gender, whereas bisexuality challenges this. There is also an element of bisexuals being greedy and not being satisfied with one sexual identity. Pumla’s comment indicates how those around her are shocked that she cannot just pick one side and stop having this sexual identity. The other negative aspect of the use of the term ‘greedy’ is that it assumes that a bisexual individual is someone who cannot be monogamous. I followed up with Nabeelah and Pumla, asking if they had ever been accused of being non-monogamous when discussing their sexual identity. Nabeelah said:

All the time. People just think that I am just a slut and that I cannot be in a relationship with one individual. People just think as a bisexual I am just having relationships with lots of people at the same time which is crazy!

Bisexuality has always been associated with the stigma of individuals being promiscuous (Barker & Langdrige, 2008). Most of my participants, regardless of race, said that they had been accused of being promiscuous. Nabeelah mentioned the word ‘slut’ that had been used in some

of the expressions of biphobia she had experienced. When women engage in non-monogamous relationships they are viewed as sluts, because a woman is meant to be faithful to her partner (Farvid et al., 2017). Men do not experience the same discrimination that women face if they behave in a way that is deemed as ‘not appropriate’ in relation to their sexuality, which speaks to the regulation of women’s sexual practices and a double standard that exists. Since bisexual individuals are attracted to more than one gender, it is assumed that the attraction to multiple individuals occurs at the same time. I believe that this way of thinking contributes to the misunderstanding of what bisexuality is, and fuels the stigma around this sexual identity, thus, as stated in Chapter 4, making it difficult for individuals to disclose (McLean, 2007; Schrimshaw et al., 2018).

In the research done on bisexual individuals, polyamory has been one of the topics brought up when discussing bisexual individuals in a positive manner (Rust, 2003). Some research has shown how bisexuality pushes for a shift towards the inclusion of polyamory when looking at the types of relationships that individuals can have romantically. One of the underpinnings of heteronormativity is monogamy and marriage with one partner, as this ensures the reproduction of the nuclear family, which is more common in society than other types of family structure (Lynch & Maree, 2013). Polyamory moves away from this type of partnership, hence it destabilises heteronormativity. Bisexuality challenges heteronormativity in this way by arguing for attraction to more than one gender and more than one type of romantic relationship with individuals. This has helped to slowly destigmatize polyamorous relationships, which in turn has influenced the destigmatisation of bisexuality. Two of my participants mentioned that they were polyamorous. When I asked them if their bisexuality influenced the types of relationships they had, Camilla (33) commented:

It probably has. I think just being queer allows one to think out of the box of what type of relationships one can have.

Lisa (34) commented:

For me being bisexual and poly are my identities that overlap and inform each other. I am someone who is attracted to more than one gender and someone who chooses to be in more than one relationship and disclose that to my partners.

Queer relationships allow for individuals to begin to question monogamy as the norm, and re-orientate themselves to other forms of relationships, as evident with Camilla who feels it has given her the courage to be different and claim that difference publicly. Being queer allows for individuals to not ‘fall in line’, but instead question the norm and orientate themselves differently if they choose (Ahmed, 2006). In Lisa’s case, she recognizes how both her bisexual and polyamorous identities inform who she is and have allowed her to be attracted to different genders. Bisexuality falls under the umbrella of queer identities, but I think it allows for individuals to be able to explore multiple aspects of sexual norms or practices that are outside of what is deemed acceptable, especially for women. It is no coincidence that Lisa and Camilla are both in their thirties and have been exposed to different types of relationships than just monogamy. This is in line with other research which has shown how queer individuals are more interested in different types of relationships (Carlström & Andersson, 2019; Gusmano, 2018). Bisexuality advocates for an expansive understanding of relationships and sexual identities.

The investment in the hetero/homo binary reflects itself clearly in the derogatory responses that bisexual individuals receive when disclosing their sexual identity. One of the main responses my participants mentioned as part of the discrimination they have experienced is the demand to

‘choose a side’, which comes from the idea that bisexual individuals cannot just date men or women, but must make a decision about which group they want to partner with romantically and not date individuals from both groups. This, of course, is informed by the maintenance and regulation of the hetero/homo binary, which, as mentioned in previous chapters, is enforced not only by the heterosexual community but also by the homosexual community (Hemmings, 2002). The idea of ‘choosing a side’ also highlights the belief that bisexual individuals are non-monogamous and cannot be with only one person. This was highlighted by one of my participants, Beth (28), who said:

For me, the usual always happens when I tell people I am bisexual. They assume that I am greedy and selfish because I am saying that I am not only attracted to women but also men. With lesbians I sometimes feel guilty and feel that I am not gay enough.

Dineo (22) commented:

People just always think I am just dating everyone all the time and that I must decide who is it that I want to be with.

All the above derogatory comments speak to the idea of an ‘epistemic contract of erasure’ of bisexuality, a term coined by Yoshino (2000, p. 1) and discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2. In the instances of Dineo and Beth, a form of social erasure is taking place, as people would like them both to ‘choose a side’ between being heterosexual or homosexual and not be fluid, which is how a bisexual identity can be described. The erasure happens through others not recognizing how Dineo and Beth identify as bisexuals who will not ‘choose a side’, which results in their bisexuality being delegitimized. I asked Dineo and Beth if they received these comments from both heterosexual and homosexual individuals such as friends, family or colleagues, and

they said yes, they did. Many of my participants have experienced this form of erasure from both groups, highlighting the investment that both groups have in the hetero/homo binary. This binary no longer serves the expansive sexual orientations that have moved out of the shadows and claimed space, such as a pansexual identity, which, just like bisexual identity, still faces discrimination within the LGBTQI+ community (Feinstein et al., 2020). This is illustrated in Beth's comment when she mentions that some of her lesbian friends feel that she is 'not gay enough', because she identifies as being bisexual. In this instance there is an individual erasure that occurs, as Beth herself feels a sense of guilt because lesbians have questioned the legitimacy of her sexual identity; but there is also a social erasure, since lesbian women do not consider her to be 'gay enough' because of her sexual preferences.

7.3. Investment in the binary and heteropatriarchy

As discussed in Chapter 4, there are significant frictions between lesbian women and bisexual women. This is influenced by the fact that some members of the queer community feel that bisexual individuals can opt out of being part of the community by being in what appear to be heterosexual relationships, and therefore do not face the same form of discrimination as other queer individuals who cannot do that (Ghabrial, 2019). This, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is seen as a form of 'passing'. What is interesting to note is that many of my participants highlighted how lesbian women did not want to be with them if they had previously slept with men. Dineo commented:

I came out to a woman I was dating, and she said to me that she does not want to have sex with me anymore as she doesn't want to be where a man has been.

Another participant, Zinzi (29), said:

I was with a woman and once I told her that I had slept with men previously she said she could not be with me any longer as she cannot be with a woman who has been with a man.

Flanders and Hatfield (2014) talk about the ‘one drop’ rule when discussing sexual identities. This rule has been adopted from the practices of racial segregation in the USA, where if a person had one parent who was black, they were assumed to be black and not biracial. Based on their data, Flanders and Hatfield argue that a form of biphobia occurs through the ‘one drop rule’, where lesbian women will not sleep with bisexual women because they have slept with a man in the past. As highlighted in Chapter 4, lesbian women have been apprehensive about dating bisexual women for various reasons, but with that apprehension a form of biphobia develops in which some lesbian women will not be romantic in any way with a woman who has been with a man. Another participant, Sheila (29), commented:

I was in a feminist reading group and when I told the lesbian women in the group that I was bisexual and not lesbian they said, ‘you’re still addicted to the oppressor’. It was just so shocking to me to be honest to get that kind of feedback.

When I asked Sheila how it felt to receive that response, she said:

It was kind of weird because they made me seem like being a bisexual is just like being stupid and why would I choose this.

The biphobia that occurs amongst feminist lesbian women is linked to the idea that being with a man romantically indicates a level of submission to the patriarchy. As stated in the literature

review in Chapter 2, political lesbians argue that to gain equality, women must reject all forms of patriarchy and heteronormativity. They believe that women must not be in heterosexual relationships with men as this supports the subordination of women, as shown in the response Sheila received. Bisexuality can look from the outside as if women are still choosing to engage in heterosexuality, as they can be attracted to men. This type of feminism continues to conflict with bisexual women and their beliefs and practices and comes out in the comment that Sheila received. Many of my participants said that a lot of the biphobia they experienced came from lesbian women, which was confusing to them. One of my participants, Robyn (28), made a poignant comment when I asked her why lesbian women engage in this form of biphobia:

I think being a bisexual offers a space to truly move outside of the boundaries and I think for lesbian women some of those boundaries are a form of protection from multiple forms of violence they have experienced, and so looking past boundaries is not always going to be easy.

The historical violence inflicted upon lesbian women in South Africa, specifically those who are black, has had a lasting impact on these women that has made them apprehensive about being in relationships with bisexual women. The creation of the boundaries of sexual identities (hetero/homo), as mentioned by Robyn, allows for a space where lesbian women do not have to engage with men and the potential threat of violence. This then causes conflict with bisexual women who move beyond the boundaries and are viewed as bringing potential harm into women's spaces such as lesbian romantic relationships. This has resulted in the distrust and constant questioning of bisexual women.

What was interesting to note with all my participants is how they experienced the most forms of

biphobia from other queer individuals rather than from heterosexual individuals. This is not to say that they did not experience affirmations from other queer individuals, especially my younger participants as mentioned earlier; nonetheless, they still received a significant amount of discrimination from other queer individuals. It is understandable why some lesbian and gay individuals would want to continue to invest in the binary, as it has brought about political and social recognition and this is important in the context of South Africa, which operates in terms of a binary model when looking at sex or gender.

For my participants, the biphobia that they experienced from heterosexual individuals was different from that experienced by other queer individuals. One of the main forms of biphobia coming from cisgender men that participants mentioned was the comments about ‘threesomes’. Participants highlighted how when they disclosed their bisexuality to men, many of the men would respond in ways which suggested that they (the women) would be open to a threesome. An example of this is what Zinzi said:

I just cannot tell guys about my bisexuality. It is so annoying because they will just look at me different in a sexual manner and so many of them have said to me, ‘would I be open to threesomes?’ It is just so disappointing how men always think of themselves and how they would immediately go to that conclusion.

Another participant, Lindiwe (21), said:

Whenever I tell men about my bisexuality, they immediately think that I have had threesomes before or that I am open to a threesome... just because I am bisexual they think that I am somehow into threesomes. It is crazy!!

When looking at the biphobia that my participants experienced from heterosexual individuals, in this case cisgender heterosexual males, it is evident that it occurs through the devaluing of bisexuality by inserting the male gaze into the discussion. This is highly influenced by the ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ (Rich, 1983, p. 2) that all individuals must adhere to, even if they are in queer relationships. There must be an element of heterosexuality present in queer relationships, and that is why Zinzi and Lindiwe receive the responses quoted above. The devaluing of bisexuality occurs when the assumption is made that being a bisexual means that these women will immediately be open to threesomes (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013). References to threesomes are not new as a form of harassment that bisexuals experience, but what is interesting to note is that this discrimination is directed mainly towards bisexual women and not bisexual men. Bisexual men are not sexualized in the same way as bisexual women are, as the sexuality of men is not regulated in the same way as it is for women (Fahs, 2009). Ayanda (25) made this comment:

I always look at how bisexual women are asked about threesomes, but bisexual men are not... men who sleep with both men and women are just considered gay, but women are viewed as bisexual and open to threesomes.

Even though my research did not consider bisexual men, it is important to note that the form of invisibility they experience occurs through completely ignoring bisexuality amongst men and assuming that they are homosexual instead of bisexual (Fahs, 2009). For bisexual women, the devaluing of bisexuality occurs when they are expected to participate in a ‘performative bisexuality’, especially in public, by kissing and being affectionate towards another woman. This is informed by how bisexual women have been represented in film, television and literature, where their sexual identity has either been invisible (i.e., they are immediately assumed to be

lesbian after having had long relationships with men) or in service to male sexual desires (i.e., women kissing and being sensual with each other while a man is watching) (Barker & Langdridge, 2008). This means that in the media a woman's sexual identity is never hers but always commodified for the male gaze. This was true for Zinzi, because when she disclosed her sexual identity to the men she was with, they immediately looked at her differently in a much more sexual manner over which she had no control and which she did not consent to, but which was allowed because they assumed that if she was bisexual she must be 'greedy' and therefore open to having threesomes with a man. This attitude is informed by the phallogentric perspective on sexuality in society in which there must be a male perspective included wherever women's sexuality is concerned, and an acceptable display of a woman's sexual identity means that she must be in service to the sexual desires of men and be attractive to them (Grant, 2018).

Lindiwe's comment illustrates this, because when she discloses her sexual identity, her male friends assume that she has had or is open to threesomes because of her bisexuality. It cannot be the case that she is monogamous, or that even if she is not monogamous, she would have threesomes with another woman and not with a man. This, too, speaks to the heteronormativity that regulates a woman's sexuality.

Another example was given by Mpho (35), who said:

Whenever I tell black men that I like women they immediately say that dick is a great thing and that I have not experienced the right dick and that is why I am interested in women.

Another participant, Kefilwe (26), commented:

I will tell guys that I like girls and boys and then they will say 'so you like girls?' and I

will say yes, and then they will say 'but you also like boys', and I will say yes, and then they will ask if I like them and I will say no and then they will say 'why don't you like me I am a boy'. It is just like, why are you not listening to me, and your head is crazy.

As Mpho's comment shows, the phallocentric perspective on sexuality means that the phallus must be part of any romantic relationship that a woman chooses to engage in. When Mpho discloses her sexual identity the response makes bisexuality invisible, as she does not say that she is only interested in women (i.e., lesbian women), but the fact that she is bisexual and is interested in male and female and gender-non-conforming individuals elicits a response that she has just not found the right penis to pleasure her. This falls in line with the idea that being a bisexual is just a phase or a form of experimentation (Flanders & Hatfield, 2014), and the individual needs to 'choose a side' or, in this example, get some 'good penis.' Bisexuality is constantly defending its legitimacy as a form of sexuality, which is frustrating for my participants I interviewed.

Mpho only speaks about the responses of black men when discussing her sexuality. She has experienced some black men being negative towards her sexual identity, and through this a negative racialization of male identity occurs where it is assumed that all black men will have the same response. I asked her in a follow-up interview if white men responded in the same way, and she said:

I don't know as I do not have many white male friends. I just get stares from white men if I am being affectionate with a woman in public, which is the same with everybody. black men are the ones who have told me how they feel, even if they are not my friends and we are just having conversations in public.

The fact that black men, regardless of whether or not they are Mpho's friends, give her this negative response speaks to how black women's sexuality is viewed as existing for others' approval or for consumption by a man (Baderoon, 2014). In the South African context, of course, white women also have their sexuality discussed in public. For black women, though, the history of public scrutiny and violation they have experienced because of their bodies and their sexuality, and the negative responses they receive from black men, are just a continuation of the public regulation of black women's bodies.

Kefilwe's comment also reflects the idea of a man being present, because her encounter with the men she was in conversation with shows how men cannot understand why she is not interested in them as potential romantic partners, even though she has said that she dates both girls and boys. What is interesting to note is the different responses that my participants received from lesbian women and cisgender heterosexual men. Lesbian women do not want to engage with bisexual women, as they do not believe they are 'gay enough' because they are still attracted to men, while cisgender men do not have a problem with bisexuality if they (the men) are still present in the romantic engagement. Both responses question the legitimacy of bisexuality by questioning the validity of the experience.

The idea of threesomes also trivializes bisexual desire, as it assumes that a bisexual individual always wants to be in these types of engagement and cannot be with one single partner in a sexual manner. For the bisexual women I interviewed, and even for queer women more broadly, the possibility of being in a romantic relationship where a man is not included, or not at the centre of the relationship, goes against the current norms and nature of our heteropatriarchal society. This difference must again be regulated in some way, and in the case of bisexual women this is done by suggesting threesomes to them as a way to pull them back into the male gaze of

sexual desire while also questioning the ability of a bisexual individual to be monogamous.

Karabo (21) commented:

...telling men or women [about her bisexual identity] is never easy. Women just think it is a phase and that you are just being bi-curious or a lesbian, and men just want you to be part of their threesomes or sexual ideas. It is just so frustrating because either way you're screwed.

Karabo highlights another form of erasure that bisexual individuals experience, and that is the idea that bisexuality is a temporary phase that an individual is going through and that they will 'fall in line' by becoming either hetero or homo. This form of erasure happens for all bisexuals, but again there are differences between the genders. In the case of bisexual men, no space is given for them to be able to be bi-curious about their sexual identity. This is informed by the idea that a man's sexual identity is a lot more rigid and fixed than a woman's, and therefore he can only be heterosexual or homosexual. In this instance the 'one drop rule' is used against bisexual men, because once they have had a same-sex experience they are not deemed to be bisexual but are immediately viewed as homosexual (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013). For bisexual women, the experience is different, because they could have one experience of being intimate with another woman and they are not then assumed to be lesbian or even bisexual but are assumed to be experimenting and not claiming a specific identity. Research has shown how women do not consider themselves to be bisexual or lesbian even though they have had an intimate (emotional or sexual) experience with another woman (Walker, 2014). For these women, this one experience does not make them queer, but rather still heterosexual even though their sexual practices differ from what a heterosexual identity might look like. It is with this thinking in mind that when a woman engages in both same-sex and opposite-sex romantic relationships and chooses to claim a

bisexual identity, her behaviour is viewed as just a phase, or a form of curiosity to explore her sexual identity, but she is still heterosexual. Nomvula (21) commented:

It's always questions of if it is real or a phase and that it will pass over... no one understands it [her bisexual identity] as if it is unheard of and something new. People just never understand.

Nicola commented:

When I told my mom, she was like 'But are you really attracted to women?' And I said yes, and she said 'Okay, I can get you're attracted to men, but the women part is just like a thing' ... it felt like she was doubting that I was attracted to both men and women.

For Nomvula and Nicola, the responses they receive highlight how individuals' bisexuality is viewed as a phase and not a legitimate identity. When I asked both participants if those they disclosed to thought they were homosexual instead of heterosexual because of their experiences, Nomvula said:

Absolutely! People still think I will end up with a man.

And Nicola responded:

It depends. My family still think I am straight. My friends from high school think I am just experimenting, but my other friends are accepting of it.

As mentioned in previous chapters, Diamond's (2008) research has shown how women living in the USA discover that their sexuality is fluid over a long period of time. What is interesting in both Nomvula's and Nicola's comments quoted above is that most of the responses they received

viewed them as heterosexual and not homosexual or lesbian. This speaks to the rejection of bisexuality, but it also speaks to the consistent imposition of heteronormativity on women. For bisexual men they are also limited as they are assumed to be homosexual and never bisexual. Heteronormativity works differently for women, as they are assumed to be heterosexual unless they completely move away from any engagement with men. For women who choose to be in romantic relationships outside of heteronormativity, there is always this constant push-back and regulatory force with which they must contend. For bisexual men they are also limited as they are assumed to be homosexual and someone who has had opposite-sex experiences which is limiting and undermines bisexuality. Heteronormativity in relation to sexual identity works differently for women, as they are assumed to be heterosexual unless they completely move away from any engagement with men. This is informed by the idea of controlling women's bodies and how they choose to use their bodies, especially in their romantic engagements, if these go against the norm of what is expected. For women who choose to be in romantic relationships outside of heteronormativity, there is always this constant push-back and regulatory force with which they must contend.

The constant questioning of sexual engagements, and of the ability to reproduce and have a family, indicates how heteronormativity persists in queer spaces. Some of my participants mentioned that one of the ways in which they experienced homophobia and biphobia is the comments about whether they were having 'real sex' with their partners, or whether they were able to have children. Kefilwe (26) commented:

People are so obsessed with sex, I just don't get it. What upsets me is that they want to make sexuality about how do you have sex. Many people have asked me how do I have sex with my girlfriend and I find it so rude because I would never ask them that, but they

think they can ask me that because I am with a woman.

The questioning of whether queer women are having ‘real sex’ speaks to the idea of the centrality of the phallus and how it needs to be present for sexual practices to be viewed as ‘real’ (Butler, 2006). The lack of a phallus in a sexual encounter means that queer women are not engaging in ‘real sex’, according to a heteronormative framework. The way in which people easily ask Kefilwe about her sexual practices indicates the easiness with which a queer identity can be questioned in a heterosexual society, especially in the case of women. This is particularly important in a country like South Africa that has legal rights enshrined and protected for LGBTQI+ individuals, yet where the questioning persists. Kefilwe also points out how people have associated sexual practices with a sexual identity. She questions the idea that you can reduce a sexual identity to sexual practices. This then moves away from the idea of having a fixed sexual identity, rather than sexual practices, beliefs and attractions that inform an individual’s preferences. As mentioned in Chapter 4 in relation to sexual identities, one must look at other factors that shape how an individual will identify. In this instance, Kefilwe’s sexual practices cannot be tied to a sexual identity, as she is sleeping with a woman but identifies as bisexual and not lesbian, as one would assume. When I went back to ask her about this comment in a second interview, she said:

I just think for me being bisexual in some ways allows me to not be so restricted with a specific identity. Everyone will know that I sleep with individuals regardless of their gender and also, I am more interested in who I am attracted to versus the gender or sexual identity that someone sees themselves.

For Kefilwe, being bisexual gives her space to not be limited to what one would think that sexual

identity is, but rather to focus on attraction and not identity. Borgos (2007) argues that if the identity of an individual is not stable and is constantly changing and being influenced by numerous factors, internal and external, then this should also apply to their sexual identity in that it also should not be fixed, and should be allowed to shift over the life period of the individual. Bisexuality allows for the instability of sexual identity to exist, as an individual can be in sexual and romantic relationships with different individuals of different genders and not have to be classified as having a particular identity. This, of course, falls in line with a queer identity that seeks to look past the limitations of fixed sexual identities and rather have a fluid, non-binary understanding of identity.

Linked to the questioning of sexual practices that Kefilwe referred to is the idea of reproduction and family. One of the common forms of homophobia/biphobia that my respondents experienced when disclosing their sexual identity to others was the questioning of how they were going to have children, or even whether they were going to have a family. Beth commented:

I find that when I tell people I am engaged to a woman they will say to me can you have children? How will you have children? I just don't understand why people think that I won't be able to have children, if I wanted them, with my fiancée.

Another respondent, Kopano (27), said:

When I told my sister I was with a woman the first thing she said to me is, will you be able to have kids? I was shocked because she has not really asked me if I wanted kids before when I introduced her to my boyfriends, but now when I have a girlfriend, she is asking me this question. I was just so hurt and upset, and I said nothing.

Both comments highlight the homophobia as well as the heteronormativity that LGBTQI+ individuals face when they disclose their sexual identity, or when they might be thinking of having a family. As mentioned in previous chapters, there are LGBTQI+ rights enshrined in the South African Constitution which have translated into LGBTQI+ individuals being able to adopt children or engage in different reproductive assisted practices such as in vitro fertilization or gamete intrafallopian transfer, which are used by both heteronormative and homosexual couples to conceive a child. This has meant that LGBTQI+ individuals are able to have a family that is not located in a heterosexual relationship. The ability of LGBTQI+ individuals to create families challenges the norm of having a man and a woman creating a family, which has always been the idea of how a family is built in South African society. This action is deemed to be a threat to the heteronormativity in society and results in the negative comments that are made to my participants about family creation. Kopano's comments indicate that once she started to be in a non-heterosexual relationship, the question of having a child and creating a family was immediately asked by her sister as it was assumed this was not a possibility. What I also find interesting in Kopano's comment is how it was assumed that she has always wanted children, and once she decided not to be in a relationship with a man, that assumption was immediately questioned. This speaks to the idea of the regulation and control of women's bodies, where it is assumed that all women will want to build a family and have children. If a woman chooses not to do that it is deemed unacceptable, and therefore must be challenged in multiple ways such as derogatory comments. This again goes back to the regulation of women's bodies in the bedroom and how they choose to build families. The same regulation does not occur for men as it does for women, and that speaks to the patriarchal nature of South African society, which seeks to control women's bodies in all respects.

7.4 Physical violence experienced by bisexual women.

As mentioned earlier, my participants have experienced harassment because of their sexuality, and some of that harassment has resulted in physical violence. This violence is informed by the homophobia that LGBTQI+ individuals experience in South Africa, even though there are legal protections for them. The violence that was inflicted on my participants was experienced by those who were black women. LGBTQI+ violence that is documented and profiled in South Africa occurs mainly in residential spaces such as the townships where black people are the majority of residents. This does not mean that homophobic violence does not occur in white spaces. Judge (2018) argues that in South Africa a ‘blackwashing’ of homophobia occurs because the reported cases that receive the most attention are ones that involve black people living in townships, specifically lesbian women. So, because GBV mainly affects women in South Africa, a narrative is created that homophobic violence only occurs in black communities. Judge argues that for some men, a lesbian identity, or what appears to be a lesbian identity in South African society, is viewed as an ‘incorrect’ sexual identity and therefore must be ‘fixed’. This way of thinking is compounded by the high levels of socio-economic inequality in townships that disproportionately affect black women, leaving them in a vulnerable position and resulting in the violence they experience, which is reported more in the media than other cases of violence against women (Judge, 2018). For white LGBTQI+ individuals, specifically white lesbians, their ‘whiteness’ works in conjunction with other modes of power such as heterosexuality and economic status, so that they are not viewed as having an ‘incorrect’ sexual identity. They are absent from the discussion of homophobic violence as they are protected by their race and economic status in the country. The rates of homophobic violence inflicted in townships across the country are high, and one of my participants, Ayanda (25), told me of the

multiple incidents of violence she had experienced:

I have had people spike my drink at Roving Bantu Kitchen and luckily someone saw and so I did not drink my drink and they chased the dude out... I was out with my girlfriend in Menlyn, and we were affectionate in public at some restaurant. Some guys were trying to join us, and we said no thanks. When we were done, and we were in the parking lot they tried again, and we said no and then they hit me and my girlfriend. We didn't fight because we knew it could have gotten worse.

Another participant, Kefilwe (26), commented:

I was with my girlfriend in a tavern and guys were hitting on me and I was just ignoring them. When I went to the bathroom the same guys came around me and they started to push me around and hit me and so I fought back, and luckily other guys came, and they stopped the guys.

When I asked Ayanda how it made her feel to have gone through that, she commented:

It was just so scary because I just don't trust men anymore, especially in public when I am with my girlfriend. I just am always aware of my surroundings, the people I am around when I am out. Even when I am not with my girlfriend, I am just always aware of where I am and who is around me. I live in South Africa, I have no choice!

For both Kefilwe and Ayanda, their experiences came because of their resistance to being pulled back into the heteronormativity of how women should behave in romantic relationships. In both incidents, their public display of their romantic desires (i.e., being physically romantic in public with a woman) indicated their resistance, and this was met with physical violence. What I found

in my research was that it was only black women who said that they had experienced some form of harassment or physical violence because of their public display of their sexuality. white participants had experienced forms of stigma and derogatory comments, but not physical violence. Ayanda is always aware of where she is and who she is around, because she lives in a country where women experience violence. As mentioned in previous chapters, my observation from my research is that my black participants were a lot more aware of the potential threat of violence than their white counterparts. This does not mean that my white participants were not aware of the potential threat of violence, but my black participants were fully conscious and aware of it all the time, especially when they were in public spaces. Vuyo (24) commented:

I just know that if I had a girlfriend, I just could not kiss her in public. It is just not safe.

As stated in the literature review in Chapter 2, African women's bodies are viewed as not their own, but rather as bodies to regulate or inflict violence upon, if they do not 'behave'. This way of thinking has influenced how black women move or express themselves in public. The fact that Vuyo says that she 'just knows' that she could not be affectionate with her potential girlfriend in public indicates a level of awareness and conforming that she has had to accept in order to be free from potential violence. This comes from the generational violence that African women's bodies have experienced and that continues to this day. This violence is critical when we look at African women's sexual identities that do not conform to heteronormativity, and how violence is used against them to make them conform but also to get these bodies to do what others want from them. Matebeni (2013) argues that this informs the violence inflicted on black lesbian women, as their bodies are viewed as not their own but rather in service to others, and therefore they have to be more conscious about how they display their sexual desires in public.

Both Kefilwe and Ayanda have also experienced ‘corrective rape’ because of their sexual identity. ‘Corrective rape’ is a hate crime in which an individual is raped because of their perceived sexual orientation, such as homosexuality or bisexuality (Morrissey, 2013). The term has been used to identify cases in which lesbian women experience this type of violence because of their sexual identity in South Africa, which in some cases has resulted in death (Matebeni, 2011). When I asked Kefilwe what happened she did not want to go into detail about it, but she did say:

I just remember before the rape that he said he wanted to show me how I have the right sex... I then just blanked out.

In the above comment Kefilwe points out the main reason ‘corrective rape’ occurs, which is to ‘correct’ the sex that lesbian women or bisexual women are having. During the colonial era, black female bodies were documented as ‘over-sexualized’ and ‘unruly’ and needing to be ‘regulated’ in order to adhere to what it meant to be a black woman (Lake, 2014). This way of thinking persists in the post-colonial period in relation to black lesbian bodies, as their sexual desires and identity are viewed as a problem since they go against the heteropatriarchal order in South Africa, and this order is maintained by black men through the act of ‘corrective rape’. Muholi (2004) takes a different view when looking at this violence: she argues that the violence inflicted is a sign of women not engaging in the heteronormativity that is expected of their bodies. Queer women are imagining a different way of being in relationships, and this must be stopped, hence the violence.

When I asked Ayanda about her experience, she was more forthcoming and commented:

I think having experienced corrective rape has made me so nervous to be around men

and nervous to be affectionate in public spaces... I have gone to therapy, and I am dealing with it, but it is just not safe in the streets. and men just feel they can do whatever they want to do to you.

I then asked her if she experienced the violence while being in a township and she said:

Actually no. It happened to me in Parktown, with a guy who was a friend of friend. He seemed cool but you just never know, hey.

Again, Ayanda is highlighting her awareness of how she must conduct herself in public because of her violent experience, but also because South Africa has a high level of violence towards women which has made her very nervous to express her sexual identity in public. The fact that her rape occurred in an upper-middle-class suburban area (Parktown) speaks to how this type of violence is not just located in a particular space, but rather is linked to a specific group of women. The reported cases of corrective rape have only involved black women. No cases of this act have been reported involving white lesbian, bisexual or queer women. What is also important in Ayanda's comment is that the perpetrator of her rape was not a stranger, but rather someone she knew, which is in line with data in South Africa that have shown that most victims of sexual violence know their perpetrator before the incident occurs (Gqola, 2015). In public or private spaces, women must be constantly aware of where they are and those around them, just like Ayanda. The result of this is a constant regulation of behaviour that women must perform to avoid experiencing violence.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown the different forms of violence, harassment and erasure that bisexual individuals experience. This has made my participants aware of how they behave in public, as the threat of violence against women is severe in South Africa. At the same time, bisexual individuals experience a unique form of biphobia, as other LGBTQI+ individuals and heterosexual individuals are invested in the hetero/homo binary that bisexuality challenges. This has resulted in my participants experiencing biphobia through a constant questioning of the legitimacy of a bisexual identity. Bisexuals continue to face resistance from both hetero and homo spaces, but this offers a possibility for individuals to move beyond existing boundaries of understanding sexual identities and shift towards a more fluid and contextual way of understanding sexual behaviours, practices and attractions.

For my participants, the violence that they experienced highlights the heteropatriarchy that exists and that influences the expectations of how women, regardless of their sexual identity, should express themselves and behave in public when it comes to their sexuality. There is an unfortunate dance that women in South Africa must engage in. I say this because we constantly have to be conscious of how, when and where we can express our sexuality, as taking a wrong step could result in violence. This dance does not occur for men in South Africa, and this speaks to the gendered nature of violence in the country.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter will outline the contributions this study makes to sexuality studies and how this informs the ways in which we understand women's ability to claim and express their sexuality from a Global South perspective. I also discuss the limitations of this study, and finally I look at recommendations for what research should come next in this field.

8.2 Summary and findings

The chapters of this thesis have discussed the experiences of bisexual women in Johannesburg. The invisibility of bisexuality (Barker & Langdridge, 2008) has resulted in limited research being conducted in this area, and with this study I have tried to contribute to this field from an African/Global South perspective. In the thesis I have looked at how bisexuality continues to be undefinable, as my participants have differing perspectives on this, but a theme that came through in my interviews with them was fluidity and not adhering to single-sex attraction. Their narratives make a case for moving beyond the hetero/homo binary way in which we understand sexuality and moving away from the fixed and rigid understandings of sexuality. They also encourage us to view our sexuality as a part of our identity that can change over the course of our lives. Sexuality is about practices, behaviours and desires, and bisexuality reveals a fluid perspective on all of these and not a linear and fixed way of understanding sexuality. My participants had different partners from different genders over time, and their desires shifted over time as they were influenced by their contexts and life course. This does not mean that they were not 'queer enough' or they were just 'in a phase', but rather they were open to experience the

fluid nature of their sexuality as bisexual women.

At the beginning of this project, I wished to contribute to the acknowledgement and visibility of bisexuality. I aimed to use queer theory as a perspective on how one can understand bisexuality. Through this whole process I have come to feel that there is not an urgent need to find a definitive bisexual identity. The lack of boundaries around this identity and the fact that there is no clear definition of bisexuality contribute to queer theory in moving away from fixed silo identities, and allowing an individual's sexuality to be viewed as it shifts over time. I also argue that setting boundaries around what is and what is not 'bisexual' becomes challenging, as there will constantly be different ideas about where the boundaries of this identity are and who gets to define them. This is particularly important as historically these boundaries have not been created by those who are most marginalized. I believe a queer perspective is one that aligns best with bisexuality, as it indicates that the bisexual individual is not living according to the heterosexual norm, and that this difference in sexual identity should not be subject to boundaries in terms of behaviours, practices and performances relating to sexuality. This does mean, though, that more research needs to be done on queer sexualities that do not silo identities but where these identities are contextual and intersectional.

Disclosure of one's sexuality is something which is also understood and experienced from differing perspectives. Amongst my participants it was evident that younger participants did not see a need to disclose, while older participants felt this was necessary. I believe this is influenced by the constitutional rights that have been won for LGBTQI+ individuals in South Africa, which allow younger participants to not feel the need to disclose as these rights give them this agency. Furthermore, the idea of disclosure stems from Global North countries, and this is something that both I and some of my participants questioned. When looking at the *supi* in Ghana or the women

in northern Uganda who are in same-sex relationships (Dankwa, 2021; Wa Tushabe, 2017) what is evident is that these women do not participate in the act of disclosure, because it is illegal in the country, yet they are still able to perform their sexuality just like some of my participants without having to perform this action in their public or private spaces. At the same time new ways of disclosure such as inviting in allow for LGBTQI+ individuals to have agency on when, where and to whom they chose to disclose to. This is important as it puts the power back in the individual's hands and there is no expectation of others outside on whether they should disclose or not. This has made me think about disclosure and its necessity, because, as mentioned earlier in this study, I wanted to contribute to the visibility and legitimacy of bisexuality. Part of that, I believed, was informed by more bisexuals disclosing their sexuality and claiming it publicly. At the end of this project, I concluded that disclosure is not always necessary if we are to truly challenge how we understand sexualities, and that bisexuality offers us the opportunity to challenge sexual identity binaries. At the same time, when looking at the recent anti-LGBTQI+ backlash that is occurring in Uganda, Ghana and other parts of the world, I do think that part of the political work needed will be claiming queer sexualities in public again and using disclosure as a way to secure rights. This disclosure must be done in a way that does not put people's lives at risk and must be inclusive and contextual.

Lastly, this study has shown how women living in Johannesburg continue to navigate and negotiate their bisexuality in different ways. For women in this country, gender-based violence, and particularly the high levels of violence against queer women, continue to be a threat. These women have constructed their identity in ways that reflect their racial and age differences. Class still plays an important role in how women engage with spaces, but this study has shown how queer individuals have tried to create spaces that are inclusive of individuals from different

backgrounds. This, of course, mirrors the broader South African society, where class and race continue to shape the social access that people have regarding how they express their sexuality. I believe this is important when trying to understand women's sexuality in South Africa.

8.3 Limitations of the study

From the onset of this project, I knew that I wanted to focus on bisexual women and not on all bisexual individuals. This was informed by my commitment to contributing to the canon of knowledge about women's lived experiences, especially the experiences of black women, as they have historically been marginalized in gender and sexuality studies. I believe that I was able to bring forth the experiences of bisexual women through this study, but during the process I realized how bisexual men needed to be included in the study. When I was reaching out to participants, I noticed that many male bisexual individuals reached out and wanted to be a part of the study. Unfortunately, this was not possible, but I did have informal conversations with two bisexual men. It was through these conversations and in looking at the literature on bisexuality that I recognized the importance of including bisexual men, or bisexual gender-non-conforming individuals, in the research. In my analysis I highlight the differences between how people respond to bisexual women and to bisexual men, and I believe that future studies can provide comparative perspectives on what it means for women and men to be bisexual and on the different challenges that each group faces. This will contribute significantly to the work on bisexuality, which is important in sexuality studies.

Another limitation of my study was that most of my participants came from middle-class or upper-class backgrounds. There were no participants who were working-class. I tried to be as diverse as possible in terms of selecting my sample, but unfortunately, I was only able to find

participants from these groups. I believe that this did not give a diverse perspective on the class positions of bisexual women. I do believe that one of the spaces in which I was able to see women from all classes was at some of the queer parties hosted in Johannesburg (e.g. *Pussy Party* events), and this was discussed in Chapter 6, where I looked at how these spaces bring about inclusivity of all queer individuals who have been historically marginalized.

This study was specifically concerned with bisexual women and therefore it cannot be generalized to all queer women. I believe that this is important, as some research puts all queer women in the same category even though they have different and unique experiences. This study contributes to the knowledge on queer women, specifically bisexual women living in the Global South, but is not generalizable beyond urban Johannesburg.

8.4 Future research

Studies going forward need to include bisexuals in how we understand all queer individuals. Understandably there are unique experiences for all queer individuals, but research must not silo bisexual individuals to separate them from other discussions. Historically research on bisexuals has occurred within a negative framework relating to mental health, suicide and promiscuous behaviour (Johnson, 2016; Persson & Pfaus, 2015; Ross et al., 2018). The stigma attached to bisexuality is heavily influenced by this research and therefore this needs to change so that a fuller perspective on bisexuals is discussed in research and other spaces.

I believe that regarding queer women, a lot more research needs to focus on our pleasures and joys as sexual beings. I believe that this is important for all women, as our sexual desires and pleasures are still negotiated through a heteronormative and patriarchal lens. This will contribute to viewing women in a multidimensional manner that allows us the space to be in discussion

about our own sexuality rather than being told what it should be. Lastly, during this study one of the things I concluded was that future research needs to look at queer joy. When one looks at sexuality studies, historically these studies have focused on different forms of marginalization such as violence and discrimination affecting queer individuals, especially women. In the South African context, they have focused on these themes and on sexual health and reproductive rights (SHRR), which have been influenced by the HIV/Aids pandemic that affected the country (Cloete et al., 2008). Another influence on the research is the violence inflicted on lesbian women, which has required research and advocacy work. The focus on SHRR and violence has limited the conversation about how we understand queer individuals in the broader society. Research has not looked at the queer joy and community that queer individuals have been able to create, despite the challenges they face. I believe that this is important in the study of sexuality, as it shows the fullness of queer individuals and not just these challenges. Queer joy is important, as it moves away from showing queer individuals as victims, viewing us instead as having agency, creativity, resilience and the ability to imagine how we can create inclusive ways of being for all.

References

- Abbas, H., & Ekine, S. (2013). Introduction. In *Queer African Reader*. Pambazuka Press
- Achuthan, A., Biswas, R., & Dhar, A. K. (2007). *Lesbian standpoint*. Sanhati.
- Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology*. Duke University Press.
- Akinwotu, E. (2023, March 23). Uganda lawmakers passed some of the harshest anti-gay legislation in the world. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/23/1165527228/uganda-lawmakers-passed-some-of-the-harshest-anti-gay-legislation-in-the-world>
- Alarie, M., & Gaudet, S. (2013). “I don't know if she is bisexual or if she just wants to get attention”: Analyzing the various mechanisms through which emerging adults invisibilize bisexuality. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 13(2), 191–214.
- Allen-Gessesse, K.K (2020, December 10). COVID-19 and Africa symposium: The intersection of LGBT rights in Africa and the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://opiniojuris.org/2020/12/10/covid-19-and-africa-symposium-the-intersection-of-lgbt-rights-in-africa-and-the-covid-19-pandemic/>
- Amadiume, I. (1987). *Male daughters, female husbands: Gender and sex in an African society*. Zed Books.
- AmBi. (n.d.). *Bi Community starts with you*. https://www.ambi.org/?fbclid=IwAR1cLPyENY_1gQf3XCFRhjc1AaiogM0zwvUoKkod4QPFWAS0ny8ZMPi3KD8
- Amnesty International. (2021, February 9). *Southern Africa: Homes become dangerous place for women and girls during COVID-19 lockdown* [Press release]. Retrieved November 1, 2021, from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/02/southern-africa-homes-become-dangerous-place-for-women-and-girls-during-covid19-lockdown/>

- Andrews, P.E (2001). The stepchild of national liberation: Women and rights in the new South Africa. In Andrews, P.E. & Ellmann, S. (eds.), *The post-Apartheid constitutions: perspectives on South Africa's basic law*. Ohio University Press
- Arndt, M., & De Bruin, K. (2011). Measurement of attitudes towards bisexual men and women among South African university students: The validation of an instrument. *Journal of Homosexuality* 58, 497–520.
- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1998). Ethnography and participant observation. In In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S., Eds., *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Sage, 248–261.
- Babbie, E., & Mouton, J. (2005). *The practice of social research*. Oxford University Press.
- Baderoon, G. (2014). *Regarding Muslims: From slavery to post-apartheid*. Wits University
- Bagnol, B., Matebeni, Z., Simon, A., Blaser, T. M., Manuel, S., & Moutinho, L. (2010). Transforming youth identities: Interactions across ‘races/colors/ethnicities,’ gender, class and sexualities in Johannesburg, South Africa. *Sexual Research and Social Policy*, 7, 283–297.
- Baiocco, R., Fontanesi, L., Santamaria, F., Ioverno, S., Barbara Marasco, Baumgartner, E., B. L. B. Willoughby, & Laghi, F. (2015). Negative parental responses to coming out and family functioning in a sample of lesbian and gay young adults. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24, 1490–1500. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-014-9954-z>
- Baiocco, R., Pistella, J., & Morelli, M. (2020). Coming out to parents in lesbian and bisexual women: The role of internalized sexual stigma and positive LB identity. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1-11.

- Bakare-Yusuf, B. (1999). The economy of violence: Black bodies and the unspeakable terror. In J. Price & M. Shildrick (Eds.), *Feminist theory and the body: A reader* (pp. 311–322). Edinburgh University Press.
- Barker, M., & Langdrige, D. (2008). Bisexuality: Working with a silenced sexuality. *Feminism and Psychology*, 18(3), 389–394.
- Bashonga, R., & Khuzwayo, Z. (2017). “This thing of the victim has to prove that the perp intended to assault is kak!”: Social media responses to sexual violence on South African university campuses. *Agenda*, 31(3-4), 35–49.
- Baumgartner, R. (2021). “I think that I’m not a relationship person”: Bisexual women’s accounts of (internalised) binegativity in non-monogamous relationship narratives. In E. Maliepaard & R. Baumgartner (Eds.), *Bisexuality in Europe* (pp. 115–130). Routledge.
- Beagan, B. L., & Hattie, B. (2015). Religion, spirituality, and LGBTQ identity integration. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 9(2), 92-117.
- Bennett, J. (2017). Fashionable strategies: Travels in gender and sexuality studies. In J. Bennett & S. Tamale (Eds.), *Research on gender and sexualities in Africa* (pp.1-14). CODESRIA.
- Bennett, J., & Tamale, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Research on gender and sexualities in Africa*. African books collective.
- Bertaux, D., & Kohli, M. (1984). The life story approach: A continental view. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10(1), 215–237.
- Beyrer, C., Trapence, G., Motimedi, F., Umar, E., Iipinge, S., Dausab, F., & Baral, S. (2010). Bisexual concurrency, bisexual partnerships, and HIV among Southern African men who have sex with men. *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 86(4), 323-327.

- Boellstorff, T. (2003). Dubbing culture: Indonesian gay and lesbi subjectivities and ethnography in an already globalized world. *American Ethnologist*, 30(2), 225-242.
- Bogatsu, A. (2016, October 19). At Pussy Party, there's no room to be a dick. *okayafrica*.
<https://www.okayafrica.com/pussy-party-johannesburg-south-africa/>
- Borgos, A. (2007). The boundaries of identity: Bisexuality in everyday and theoretical contexts. In R. Kuhar & J. Takács (Eds.) *Beyond the pink curtain: Everyday life of LGBT people in Eastern Europe* (pp. 169–183). Mirovni Institut.
- Borver, J., Gurevich, M., & Mathieson, C. (2001). (Con) tested identities: Bisexual women reorient sexuality. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 2(2–3), 23–52.
- Botes, J. (2021). The pink inner-city: Creating queer spaces in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, during apartheid. *Revue d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Afrique*, 2, 113–129.
<https://oap.unige.ch/journals/rhca/article/view/02botes/05en>
- Boyer, C. R., & Galupo, M. P. (2015). 'Prove it!' Same-sex performativity among sexual minority women and men. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 6(4), 357–368.
- Breetveld, R. R. (2021). Forms of bisexual injustice. In E. Maliepaard & R. Baumgartner (Eds.), *Bisexuality in Europe: Sexual citizenship, romantic relationships, and bi+ identities* (pp. 149-162). Taylor & Francis.
- Bristow, J. (2011). *Sexuality*. Routledge.
- Broad, K. L. (2011). Coming out for parents, families and friends of lesbians and gays: From support group grieving to love advocacy. *Sexualities*, 14(4), 399–415.
- Brown, J. (2002a). Mass media influences on sexuality. *Journal of Sex Research*, 39(1), 42–45.
- Brown, T. (2002b). A proposed model of bisexual identity development that elaborates on experiential differences of women and men. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 2(4), 67–91.

- Browne, K. (2015). Contesting anglo-american privilege in the production of knowledge in geographies of sexualities and genders. *Revista Latino-americana de Geografia e Gênero, Ponta Grossa*, 6(2), 250–270.
- Brownfield, J. M., Brown, C., Jeevanba, S. B., & VanMattson, S. B. (2018). More than simply getting bi: An examination of coming out: growth for bisexual individuals. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 5(2), 220-232.
- Budoo-Scholtz, A. (2023, May 30). *Uganda's president signs repressive anti-LGBT law: New law violates fundamental rights*. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved September 6, 2023, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/30/ugandas-president-signs-repressive-anti-lgbt-law>.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "sex"*. Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Byrd, R. D. (2016). Race and sexuality: Whitewashing representation. In Campbell, C. (ed.) *The Routledge companion to media and race* (pp. 304-311). Routledge.
- Cameron, E. (1994). Unapprehend felons: Gays and lesbians and the law in South Africa. In M. Gevisser & E. Cameron (Eds.), *Defiant desire: Gay and lesbian lives in South Africa* (pp 89-98). Ravan Press.
- Camminga, B. (2018). *Transgender refugees and the imagined South Africa: Bodies over borders and borders over bodies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Camminga, B. (2020). Marooned: Seeking asylum as a transgender person in Johannesburg. In N. Falkof & C. van Staden (Eds.), *Anxious Joburg: The inner lives of a Global South city* (pp 187 – 207). Wits University Press.

- Camminga, B. (2020). Marooned: Seeking Asylum As a transgender person in Johannesburg. In N. Falkof & C. Van Staden (Eds.), *Anxious Joburg: The inner lives of a global South city* (pp. 205–225). Wits University Press.
- Camminga, B., & Matebeni, Z. (Eds.). (2021). *Beyond the mountain: Queer life in “Africa’s gay capital”*. Unisa Press.
- Canham, H. (2017). Mapping the black queer geography of Johannesburg’s lesbian women through narrative. *Psychology in Society (PINS)*, 55, 84–107.
- Carey, B. (2005, July 5). Straight, gay or lying? Bisexuality revisited. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/05/health/straight-gay-or-lying-bisexuality-revisited.html>
- Carlse, J. E. (2018). Black lesbian identities in South Africa: Confronting a history of denial. *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*, 24(1), 16–32.
- Carlström, C., & Andersson, C. (2019). Living outside protocol: Polyamorous orientations, bodies, and queer temporalities. *Sexuality & Culture*, 23(4), 1315–1331.
- Carolin, A. (2017). Apartheid’s Immorality Act and the fiction of heteronormative whiteness. *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 54(1), 111–128.
- Cater J. K. (2011). Skype a cost-effective method for qualitative research. *Rehabilitation Counselors & Educators Journal* 4, 10–17.
- Chan, R. C. H., Operario, D., & Mak, W. W. S. (2020) Bisexual individuals are at greater risk of poor mental health than lesbians and gay men: The mediating role of sexual identity stress at multiple levels. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 260, 292–301.

- Chan-Sam, T. (1994). Five women: Profiles of black lesbian life on the Reef. In M. Gevisser & E. Cameron (Eds.), *Defiant desire: Gay and lesbian lives in South Africa* (pp. 186-192). Ravan Press.
- Christopher, A. J. (1995). Regionalisation and ethnicity in South Africa 1990–1994. *Area*, 27(1), 1–11.
- Cloete, A., Simbayi, L. C., Kalichman, S. C., Strebel, A. & Henda, N. (2008). Stigma and discrimination experiences of HIV-positive men who have sex with men in Cape Town, South Africa. *AIDS Care*, 20(9), 1105–1110.
- Collison, C. (2016, December 8). Lesbian activist's murder puts spotlight on hate crime: Shocking new statistics. *Mail & Guardian*. <https://mg.co.za/article/2016-12-08-00-lesbian-activists-murder-puts-spotlight-on-hate-crime-new-shocking-statistics>
- Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. L. (2008). *Of revelation and revolution, Volume 1: Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness in South Africa*. University of Chicago Press.
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power*. Polity Press.
- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996).
<http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SACConstitution-web-eng.pdf>
- Craig, S. L., & McInroy, L. (2014). You can form a part of yourself online: The influence of new media on identity development and coming out for LGBTQ youth. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 18(1), 95-109.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), Article 8. <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.
- Currier, A., & Migraine-George, T. (2016). Queer studies/African studies. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 22(2) 281–304.
- Dankwa, S. (2021). Knowing women: Same-sex intimacy, gender, and identity in postcolonial Ghana. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108863575>
- Dankwa, S. O. (2009). “It’s a silent trade”: female same-sex intimacies in post-colonial Ghana. *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 17(3), 192-205.
- De Beauvoir, S. (1997). Introduction to *the second sex*. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), *The second wave: A reader in feminist theory*, (pp. 11-19). Routledge.
- De Gruchy, J., & De Gruchy, S. (2005). *The church struggle in South Africa* (25th anniversary ed.). Fortress Press.
- DeHaan, S., Kuper, L. E., Magee, J. C., Bigelow, L., & Mustanski, B. S. (2013). The interplay between online and offline explorations of identity, relationships, and sex: A mixed-methods study with LGBT youth. *Journal of Sex Research*, 50(5), 421–434. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2012.661489>
- Diamond, L. (2008). *Sexual fluidity: Understanding women’s love and desire*. Harvard University Press.
- Dowling, R. (2005). Power, subjectivity and ethics in qualitative research. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in human geography* (pp. 19-29). Oxford University Press.
- Dutta, A. (2012). Claiming citizenship, contesting civility: The institutional LGBT movement and the regulation of gender/ sexual dissidence in West Bengal, India. *Jindal Global Law Review*, 4(1), 110-141

- Dutta, A. (2013). Legible identities and legitimate citizens. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 15(4), 494–514.
- Elwood, S. A. & Martin, D. G. (2000). “Placing” interviews: Location and Scales of power in qualitative research. *Professional Geographer*, 52(4), 649–657.
- Epprecht, M. (2004). *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*. McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Epprecht, M. (2008). *Heterosexual Africa? The history of an idea from the age of exploration to the age of AIDS*. Ohio University Press.
- Epprecht, M. (2013). *Sexuality and social justice in Africa: Rethinking homophobia and forging resistance*. Zed Books.
- Epprecht, M. (2018). Two decades of sexuality research in Africa south of the Sahara. *Sexualities*, 21(8), 1276–1281.
- Erickson, R. J. (1995). The importance of authenticity for self and society. *Symbolic Interaction*, 18, 121–144. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.1995.18.2.121>
- Eves, A. (2004). Queer theory, butch/femme identities and lesbian space. *Sexualities*, 7(4), 480–496.
- Fahs, B. (2009). Compulsory bisexuality? The challenges of modern sexual fluidity. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(3–4), 431–449.
- Faku’gesi. (2019). *Pussy party*. Retrieved July 21, 2021, from <https://fakugesi.co.za/contributors/pussy-party/>.
- Falkof, N. & Van Staden, C. (2020). Introduction. In N. Falkof & C. Van Staden (Eds.), *Anxious Joburg: The inner lives of a global South city (pp. 1-18)*. Wits University Press.

- Falkof, N. (2022). *Worrier state: Risk, anxiety and moral panic in South Africa*. Manchester University Press.
- Farvid, P., Braun, V., & Rowney, C. (2017). “No girl wants to be called a slut!”: Women, heterosexual casual sex and the sexual double standard. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 26(5), 544–560.
- Fausto-Sterling, A. (2020). *Sexing the body: Gender politics and the construction of sexuality* (updated ed.). Basic Books.
- Feinstein, B. A., Xavier Hall, C. D., Dyar, C., & Davila, J. (2020). Motivations for sexual identity concealment and their associations with mental health. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 20(3), 324-341.
- Filipovic, J. (2023, June 1). The global war on gay rights. *Ms Magazine*. Retrieved September 25, 2023, from <https://msmagazine.com/2023/06/01/gay-rights-religion-usa-africa/>
- Flanders, C. E., & Hatfield, E. (2014). Social perception of bisexuality. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 5(3), 232–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2012.749505>
- Flores, A. R., & Park, A. (2018). *Examining the relationship between social acceptance of LGBT people and legal inclusion of sexual minorities*. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Acceptance-and-Legal-Inclusion-April-2018.pdf>
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: Vol. 1* (R. Hurley, Trans.). Pantheon Books.
- Fox, C. O., & Ore, T. E. (2010). (Un)covering normalized gender and race subjectivities in LGBT “safe spaces”. *Feminist Studies*, 36(3), 629–649.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27919125>

- Fox, J., & Ralston, R. (2016). Queer identity online: Informal learning and teaching experiences of LGBTQ individuals on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 65, 635–642.
- Fraser, N. (2014). Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy¹. In Giroux, H. A., & McLaren (Ed.), In *Between borders* (pp. 74-98). Routledge.
- Galupo, M. P., Ramirez, J. L., & Pulice-Farrow, L. (2018). “Regardless of their gender”: Descriptions of sexual identity among bisexual, pansexual, and queer identified individuals. In C. E. Flanders (Ed.), *Under the bisexual umbrella* (pp. 108–124). Routledge.
- Ganguly, S. (2017). Understanding nonverbal cues: A key to success in interviews. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 11(2), 62–72.
- Gevisser, M. (1994). A different fight for freedom: A history of South African lesbian and gay organisation – the 1950’s to the 1990’s. In M. Gevisser & E. Cameron (Eds.), *Defiant desire: Gay and lesbian lives in South Africa*. Ravan Press.
- Ghabrial, M. A. (2019). “We can shapeshift and build bridges”: Bisexual women and gender diverse people of color on invisibility and embracing the borderlands. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 19(2), 169–197.
- Goodson, I. (2001). The story of life history: Origins of the life history method in sociology. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 1(2), 129–142.
- Gopinath, G. (2005). *Impossible desires: Queer diasporas and South Asian public cultures*. Duke University Press.
- Gqola, P. (2015). *Rape: A South African nightmare*. MF Books.

- Grant, R. F. (2018). *The queer sexual citizen: Bisexual and queer youngwomen's sexual health in Tasmania*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Tasmania].
<https://eprints.utas.edu.au/30038/>
- Graziano, K. J. (2004). Oppression and resiliency in a post-apartheid South Africa: Unheard voices of Black gay men and lesbians. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 10(3), 302–316.
- Gunkel, H. (2010). *The cultural politics of female sexuality in South Africa* (Vol. 25). Routledge.
- Gusmano, B. (2018). Coming out through an intersectional perspective: Narratives of bisexuality and polyamory in Italy. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 18(1), 15–34.
- Harbin, A. (2011). Sexual authenticity. *Dialogue*, 50(1), 77–93.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0012217311000126>
- Harrisberg, K. (2021, May 13). Fear breeds bravery as LGBT+ S. Africans resist 'war on queerness'. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN2CU0QA/>
- Hassim, S. (2006). *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa: Contesting authority*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Halliwell, E. (2014). Bisexual women's understandings of social marginalisation: The heterosexuals don't understand us but nor do the lesbians. *Feminism and Psychology*, 24(3), 352–372.
- Hemmings C. (1997). Bisexual theoretical perspectives: Emergent and contingent relationships. In Bi Academic Intervention (Ed.), *The bisexual imaginary: Representation, identity, and desire*, (pp. 14–37). London, UK
- Hemmings, C. (2002). *Bisexual spaces: A geography of sexuality and gender*. Routledge.

- Holland-Muter, S. (2018). *Negotiating normativities: Counter narratives of lesbian queer world making in Cape Town*. (Thesis). University of Cape Town, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Sociology. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11427/27892>
- Horton, B. A. (2020). Fashioning fabulation: Dress, gesture and the queer aesthetics of Mumbai Pride. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43(2), 294–307.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.06.009>
- Hubler, S. (2022, June 24). Supreme court rules on abortion: Thousands protest end of constitutional right to abortion. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/24/us/roe-wade-abortion-supreme-court>
- Hussain, N. Z. (2020, October 27). Legal hurdles faced by LGBT+ people in Africa. *Reuters*.
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-lgbt-lawmaking-idUSKBN27C2XQ>
- Jackson, S. (2006). Heterosexuality, sexuality and gender: Re-thinking the intersections. In D. Richardson, J. McLaughlin & M. E. Casey (Eds.), *Intersections between feminist and queer theory* (pp. 38-58). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jackson, S., & Scott, S. (Eds.). (1996). *Feminism and sexuality: A reader*. Columbia University Press.
- jhblive. (n.d.). *Same Sex Saturdays*. Retrieved June 26, 2022, from
<https://www.jhblive.com/Events-in-Johannesburg/party/same-sex-saturday-all-black/152483>
- Jobson, G. A., Theron, L. B., Kaggwa, J. K., & Kim, H. J. (2012). Transgender in Africa: Invisible, inaccessible, or ignored? *SAHARA-J: Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS*, 9(3), 160–163.

- Johns, D. (2020, October 11). We need to move beyond coming out and begin inviting in. *Advocate*. <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2020/10/11/we-need-move-beyond-coming-out-and-begin-inviting>
- Johnson, H. J. (2016). Bisexuality, mental health, and media representation. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 16(3), 378–396.
- Johnson, T. M., Zurlo, G. A., Hickman, A. W., & Crossing, P. F. (2018). Christianity 2018: More African Christians and Counting Martyrs. *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 42(1), 20-28.
- Jones, S. H. (2005). Auto-ethnography: Making the personal political. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Judge, M. (2018). *Blackwashing Homophobia*. Routledge
- Judge, M. (2019, September 5). Tackling sexual and gender rights within the paradox of faith. *News24*. <https://www.news24.com/news24/columnists/guestcolumn/opinion-tackling-sexual-and-gender-rights-within-theparadox-of-faith-20190905>
- Kenney, M. (2001). *Mapping gay LA: The intersection of place and politics*. Temple University Press.
- Kettani, H. (2009). Muslim population in Africa. *Proceedings of the 2009 International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities* (pp.30-38), Singapore, October 9–11.
- Khubchandani, K. (2020). *Ishtyle: Accenting gay Indian nightlife*. University of Michigan Press.
- Khuzwayo, Z., & Morison, T. (2018). Resisting erasure: Bisexual female identity in South Africa. *South African Review of Sociology*, 48(4), pp. 19–37.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2017.1413997>

- Kirkup, G. (2010). Academic blogging: Academic practice and academic identity. *London Review of Education*, 8(1), 75–84.
- Klesse, C. (2005). Bisexual women, non-monogamy and differentialist anti-promiscuity discourses. *Sexualities*, 8(4), 445–464.
- Klesse, C. (2011). Shady characters, untrustworthy partners, and promiscuous sluts: Creating bisexual intimacies in the face of heteronormativity and biphobia. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11, 227–244.
- Knous, H. M. (2006). The coming out experience for bisexuals: Identity formation and stigma management. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 5(4), 37–59.
- Konik, J., & Stewart, A. (2004). Sexual identity development in the context of compulsory heterosexuality. *Journal of Personality*, 72(4), 815–844.
- Kulick, D. (1997). The gender of Brazilian transgendered prostitutes. *American Anthropologist, New Series*, 99(3), 574–585.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.
- Lake, N. (2014). Black lesbian bodies – reflections on a queer South African archive. *Africa Insight*, 44(1), 69–83.
- Lane, T., Shade, S. B., McIntyre, J., & Morin, S. F. (2008). Alcohol and sexual risk behavior among men who have sex with men in South African township communities. *AIDS and Behavior*, 12, 78–85.
- Lapinski, J., & McKirnan, D. (2013). Forgive me father for I have sinned: The role of a Christian upbringing on lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(6), 853–872.

- Lees, N. (2021). The Brandt Line after forty years: The more North–South relations change, the more they stay the same? *Review of International Studies*, 47(1), 85–106.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021052000039X>
- Lichterman, P. (2002). Seeing structure happen: Theory-driven participant observation. In B. Klandermans & S. Staggenborg (Eds.), *Methods of social movement research: social Movements, Protest, and Contention Volume 16* (pp. 118–145). University of Minnesota Press.
- Lingel, J. (2009). Adjusting the borders: Bisexual passing and queer theory. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(3–4), 381–405.
- Livermon, X. (2012). Queer (y) ing freedom: Black queer visibilities in post-apartheid South Africa. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 18(2–3), 297–323.
- Livermon, X. (2014). Soweto nights: Making black queer space in post-apartheid South Africa. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 21(4), 508–525.
- Lucero, L. (2017). Safe spaces in online places: Social media and LGBTQ youth. *Multicultural Education Review*, 9(2), 117–128.
- Lynch, I. & Maree, J. F. (2017). Gender outlaws or a slow bending of norms? South African bisexual women’s treatment of gender binaries. *Feminist theory*, 19(3), 269–288.
- Lynch, I. (2013). Erased, elided and made invisible? South African bisexual relationships and families. In C. Lubbe-De Beer & J. Marnell (Eds.), *Home affairs: Rethinking same-sex families and relationships in contemporary South Africa* (pp. 68–86). Jacana Media.
- Lynch, I., & Maree, D. J. (2013). Negotiating heteronormativity: Exploring South African bisexual women’s constructions of marriage and family. *Feminism & Psychology*, 23(4), 459–477.

- Macdowall, L. (2009). Historicising contemporary bisexuality. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(1), 3–15
- Macharia, K. (2016). On being area-studied: A litany of complaint. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 22(2), 183–190.
- MacKinnon, C. (1997). Sexuality. In L. Nicholson (Ed.), *The second wave: A reader in feminist theory* (pp. 158-180). Routledge.
- Mainardi, A., & Pavan, E. (2020). LGBTQI online. *The international encyclopedia of gender, media, and communication* (1–8). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119429128.iegmc022>
- Maliepaard, E. (2015). Bisexuals in space and geography: More-than-queer? *Fennia*, 193(1), 148–159.
- Maliepaard, E. (2017). Bisexuality in the Netherlands: Connecting bisexual passing, communities, and identities. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 17(3), 325–348.
- Maliepaard, E. (2020). Spaces with a bisexual appearance: re-conceptualizing bisexual space (s) through a study of bisexual practices in the Netherlands. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 21(1), 45-63.
- Márquez, Z., & Miguel, D. (2020). Decentering international relations: The continued wisdom of Latin American dependency. *International Studies Perspectives*, 21(4), 403–423.
- Martin, Y. (2020). “Now I am not afraid”: Simon Nkoli, queer utopias and transnational solidarity. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 46(4), 673–687.
- Marwick, J. S. (1918). *A Lecture on the Natives in the Larger Towns*. The Technical College, Durban.
- Matebeni, Z. (2011). *Exploring Black lesbian sexualities and identities in Johannesburg*. [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. University of the Witwatersrand.
- Matebeni, Z. (2013). Intimacy, queerness, race. *Cultural Studies*, 27(3), 404–417.

- Matebeni, Z. (2021). Introduction. In B. Camminga & Z. Matebeni (Eds.), *Beyond the mountain: Queer life in “Africa’s Gay Capital”* (pp.1-12). Unisa Press.
- Matebeni, Z., Reddy, V., Sandfort, T., & Southey-Swartz, I. (2013). “I thought we are safe”: Southern African lesbians’ experiences of living with HIV. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 15(supp1.), 34–47.
- Matthijsen, N. (2018). Coming together: Experiences and lessons from an LGBTQI project in three countries. *Gender & Development*, 26(1), 139–153.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2018.1429100>
- Mbali, M. (2013). *South African AIDS activism and global health politics*. Springer.
- Mbasalaki, P. K. (2020). Through the lens of modernity: Reflections on the (colonial) cultural archive of sexuality and gender in South Africa. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 26(3), 455-475.
- McLean, K. (2007). Hiding in the closet? Bisexuals, coming out and the disclosure imperative. *Journal of Sociology*, 43(2), 151–166.
- McLean, N. (2019). (Re)considering the rainbow. *International Journal of Critical Diversity Studies*, Vol. 2(1), 24-40.
- Meneses, M. P. (2022). Silent agents of nationalist struggle? Women of Mozambique, fighting a war within a war. *African Studies*, 81(3-4), 324-339.
- Merriam-Webster. (2022). Safe space. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/safe%20space>
- Miguel, F. P. V. (2021). Centuries of silence: Contributions of an anthropologist to a history of “Homosexuality” in Southern Mozambique (16th-20th Century). *Revista Brasileira de História*, 41, 111-134.

- Milani, T. M & Lazar, M. M (2017). Seeing from the south: Discourse, gender and sexuality from southern perspectives. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 21(3), 307–319.
- Miller, R. (2000). *Researching life stories and family histories*. Sage.
- Mirza, H. S. (2009). Plotting a history: Black and postcolonial feminisms in “new times”. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 12(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320802650899>
- Mkhize, N., Bennett, J., Reddy, V., & Moletsane, R. (2010). *The country we want to live in: Hate crimes and homophobia in the lives of black lesbian South Africans*. HSRC Press.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1984). Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *Boundary 2*, 12/13, 333–358.
- Moore, D.L (2012, July 12). Coming Out or Inviting In? Part I. *The Feminist Wire*.
<https://thefeministwire.com/2012/07/coming-out-or-inviting-in-reframing-disclosure-paradigms-part-i/>
- Morris, M. (2017, December 5). *The Eastern Cape is the most homophobic province – IRR report* [Press release]. South African Institute of Race Relations. Retrieved September 23, 2023, from <https://irr.org.za/media/media-releases/the-eastern-cape-is-the-most-homophobic-province-irr-report/view>
- Morrissey, M. E. (2013). Rape as a weapon of hate: Discursive constructions and material consequences of black lesbianism in South Africa. *Women's Studies in communication*, 36(1), 72-91.
- Msimang, S. (2020). Foreword. In N. Falkof & C. Van Staden (Eds.), *Anxious Joburg: The inner lives of a global South city* (pp. xvii–xx). Wits University Press.
- Muholi, Z. (2004). Thinking through lesbian rape. *Agenda*, 61, 116–125.
- Muholi, Z. (2012). Faces and phases. *Transition: An International Review*, 107, 113–124.

- Mwachiro, K. (2018, June 27). Queer in Africa: An inclusive, unapologetic and gay-loving continent is here. *Daily Maverick*. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-06-27-queer-in-africa-an-inclusive-unapologetic-and-gay-loving-continent-is-here/>
- Ncube, G., & van Klinken, A. (2023). Abdellah Taïa and an emergent queer African Islamic discourse: Texts, visibility and intimate archives. *African Studies*, 81(3–4), 306–323.
- Ndzovu, H. J. (2019). “Un-natural”, “un-African” and “un-Islamic”: The three-pronged onslaught undermining homosexual freedom in Kenya. In A. van Klinken & E. Chitando (Eds.), *Public religion and the politics of homosexuality in Africa* (pp. 78–91). Routledge.
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 327–344.
- Nyeck, S. N. & Epprecht, M. (2013). Sexual diversity in Africa: Politics, theory, citizenship. McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Ochs, R. (1996). Biphobia: It goes more than two ways. In B. A. Firestein (Ed.), *Bisexuality: The psychology and politics of an invisible minority*. Sage.
- Otu, K. E., & van Klinken, A. (2023). African Studies Keywords: Queer. *African Studies Review*, 1-22.
- Oxford University Press (2010). *Oxford advanced learners dictionary* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Perfect, B. (2017, July 26). Same Sex Saturdays are for everybody. *BubblegumClub*. <https://bubblegumclub.co.za/music/sex-saturdays-everybody/>
- Persson, T. J., & Pfaus, J. G. (2015). Bisexuality and mental health: Future research directions. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 15(1), 82–98.

- Phelan, S. (1993). (Be)coming out: Lesbian identity and politics. *Signs*, 18(4), 765–790.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174906>
- Phungula, W. (2022, March 17). Umlazi lesbian stabbed to death for rejecting a man’s romantic advances. *IOL*. <https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/kwazulu-natal/umlazi-lesbian-stabbed-to-death-for-rejecting-a-mans-romantic-advances-ab193a8a-e92c-4510-8748-9d500015d40e>
- Pilane, P. (2020, December 4). Gender-based violence. *Mail & Guardian*.
<https://mg.co.za/special-reports/2020-12-04-gender-based-violence/>
- Plummer, K. (1995). *Telling sexual stories: Power, change and social worlds*. Routledge.
- Puar, J.K. (2012). “I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess”: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory. *philoSOPHIA* 2(1), 49-66. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/phi.2012.a486621>.
- Puckett, J. A., Horne, S. G., Surace, F., Carter, A., Noffsinger-Frazier, N., Shulman, J., Detrie, P., Ervin, A., & Mosher, C. (2017). Predictors of sexual minority youth’s reported suicide attempts and mental health. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 64(6), 697–715.
- Puri, J. (2002). *Woman, body, desire in post-colonial India: Narratives of gender and sexuality*. Routledge.
- Rankin, S. R. (2005). Campus climates for sexual minorities. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2005(111), 17–23.
- Rao, R. (2015). Re-membering Mwanga: Same-sex intimacy, memory and belonging in postcolonial Uganda. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 9(1), 1-19.

- Ratele, K. (2009). Apartheid, anti-apartheid and post-apartheid sexualities. In M. Steyn & M. van Zyl (Eds.), *The prize and the price: Shaping sexualities in South Africa* (pp. 290–306). HSRC Press.
- Reddy, V. (2005). *Moffies, stabanis and lesbos: The political construction of queer identities in Southern Africa* [Doctoral dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal].
<http://hdl.handle.net/10413/2063>
- Reddy, V. (2005). Subversive pleasures, spaces of agency. *Feminist Africa*, (5), 80-89.
- Reddy, V., Sandfort, T., & Rispel, L. (Eds.). (2009). *From social silence to social science: Same-sex sexuality, HIV & AIDS and gender in South Africa* [Conference proceedings]. HSRC Press.
- Reese, S. S. (2014). Islam in Africa/Africans and Islam. *Journal of African History*, 55(1), 17–26.
- Reid, G. (2022, June 22). Progress and setbacks on LGBT rights in Africa: An overview of the last year. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/22/progress-and-setbacks-lgbt-rights-africa-overview-last-year>
- Rich, A. (1983). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. In A. Snitow, C. Stansell & S. Thompson (Eds.), *Powers of desire: The politics of sexuality*. Monthly Review Press.
- Rich, A. C. (2003). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence (1980). *Journal of Women's History*, 15(3), 11–48.
- Roberts, T. S., Horne, S. G., & Hoyt, W. T. (2015). Between a gay and a straight place: Bisexual individuals' experiences with monosexism. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 15(4), 554–569.
- Robertson M. (2021). Queer studies and religion in Southern Africa: The production of queer Christian subjects. *Religion Compass*, 15(1), e12385

- Ross, L. E., Salway, T., Tarasoff, L. A., MacKay, J. M., Hawkins, B. W., & Fehr, C. P. (2018). Prevalence of depression and anxiety among bisexual people compared to gay, lesbian, and heterosexual individuals: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Sex Research*, 55(4–5), 435–456.
- Rubin, G. (1975). The traffic in women: Notes on the “political economy” of sex. In R. R. Reiter (Ed.), *Toward an anthropology of women* (pp. 157–210). Monthly Review Press.
- Rust, P. C. (2000). Two many and not enough: The meanings of bisexual identities. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1(1), 31–68.
- Rust, P. C. (2002). Bisexuality: The state of the union. *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 13(1), 180–240.
- Rust, P. C. (2003). Monogamy and polyamory: Relationship issues for bisexuals. In L. D. Garnets & D. C. Kimmel (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on lesbian, gay, and bisexual experiences* (pp. 475–496). Columbia University Press.
- Salo, E., Ribas, M., Lopes, P., & Zamboni, M. (2010). Living our lives on the edge: Power, space and sexual orientation in Cape Town townships, South Africa. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7, 298–309.
- Salper, R. (2011). San Diego State 1970: The initial year of the nation's first women's studies program. *Feminist Studies*, 37(3), 656–682.
- SAPA. (2012, January 24). Police still investigating taxi rank assault. *Times Live*.
<https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2012-01-24-police-still-investigating-taxi-rank-assault/>
- Scherrer, K. S., Kazyak, E., & Schmitz, R. (2015). Getting “bi” in the family: Bisexual people's disclosure experiences. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77(3), 680–696.

- Schrimshaw, E. W., Downing, M. J., & Cohn, D. J. (2018). Reasons for non-disclosure of sexual orientation among behaviorally bisexual men: Non-disclosure as stigma management. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 47, 219–233.
- Schwikowski, M. (2022, June 3). Being LGBTQ in Africa still draws stigma, violence and criminal charges. *DW*. <https://www.dw.com/en/being-lgbtq-in-africa-still-draws-stigma-violence-and-criminal-charges/a-62024366>
- Sedgwick, E.K. (1990). *Epistemology of the Closet*. University of California Press
- Shange, N. (2018, February 8). Most victims of hate crime in SA are black, male and foreign. *Times Live*. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-02-08-most-victims-of-hate-crime-in-sa-are-Black-male-and-foreign/>
- Shefer, T., & Foster, D. (2001). Discourses on women's (hetero) sexuality and desire in a South African local context. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 3(4), 375-390.
- Shisana, O., Rehle, T., Simbayi, L. C., Zuma, K., Jooste, S., Pillay-van-Wyk, V., Mbelle, N., Van Zyl, J., Parker, W., Zungu, N. P., Pezi, S., & the SABSSM III Implementation Team. (2009). *South African national HIV prevalence, incidence, behaviour and communication survey 2008: A turning tide among teenagers?* HSRC Press.
- <https://web.archive.org/web/20100522082857/http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Document-3238.phtml>
- Sika, V., & Okech, A. (2019). African sexual politics: A pan-African lesbian perspective. In S. Corrêa & R. Parker (Eds.), *SexPolitics: Trends and tensions in the 21st century. Contextual Undercurrents* (Vol. 2, 15). Sexuality Policy Watch.
- <https://sxpolitics.org/trendsandtensions/uploads/volume2-2019-09052019.pdf#page=15>

- South African News Government Agency, July 1, 2021. Spate of attacks on LGBTQI+ community in SA. <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/spate-attacks-lgbtqi-community-sa>
- South African Police Service. (2020). Crime situation in Republic of South Africa Twelve months (12) (April to March 2019_20). https://www.saps.gov.za/services/april_to_march_2019_20_presentation.pdf
- Southall, R. (2019). South Africa's precarious black middle class. *Current History*, 118(808), 169–174.
- Souto Pereira, S., Becker, S., & Gardiner, G. (2017). Sensitive sexualities: Dichotomised discourse in the erasure of bisexuality. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 8(1–2), 118–131.
- Special Reports (2020, December 4). Gender-based violence. *Mail & Guardian*. <https://mg.co.za/special-reports/2020-12-04-gender-based-violence/>
- Sprott, R. A., & Benoit Hadcock, B. (2018). Bisexuality, pansexuality, queer identity, and kink identity. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 33(1-2), 214-232.
- Stein, A., & Plummer, K. (1994). "I can't even think straight"" queer" theory and the missing sexual revolution in sociology. *Sociological theory*, 12(2), 178-187.
- Stephens, A. V. (2018). *Black lesbian identities, power and violence in public and private spaces*. (). University of Cape Town, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Psychology.
- Stewart, C. (2013, July 26). Botswana chiefs: "Homosexuality has always been here". *Erasing 76 Crimes*. <https://76crimes.com/2013/07/26/botswana/>
- Steyn, M., & Van Zyl, M. (2009). The prize and the price. In M. Steyn & M. van Zyl (Eds.), *The prize and the price: Shaping sexualities in South Africa* (pp.3–20). HSRC Press.

- Stobie, C. (2004). "Biopia" in biography: Representations of bisexuality in selected South African lives. *Scrutiny2: Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa*, 9(2), 35–52.
- Stobie, C. (2007). *Somewhere in the double rainbow: Representations of bisexuality in post-apartheid novels*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Swarr, A. L. (2009). "Stabane" intersexuality and same-sex relationships in South Africa. *Feminist Studies*, 35(3), 524–548.
- Swarr, A. L. (2012). *Sex in transition: Remaking gender and race in South Africa*. SUNY Press.
- Tamale, S. (2017). Exploring the contours of African sexualities: Religion, law and power. In J. Bennett & S. Tamale (Eds.), *Research on gender and sexualities in Africa*. CODESRIA
- Terreblanche, S. J. (2002). *A history of inequality in South Africa, 1652–2002*. University of Natal Press.
- The Roestone Collective. (2014). Safe space: Towards a reconceptualization. *Antipode*, 46, 1346–1365. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12089>
- The Star (2008, March 5). Miniskirt March Brings Taxis to a Standstill. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/miniskirt-march-brings-taxis-to-a-standstill-391909>
- Thompson, L. M. (1990). *History of South Africa*. Yale University Press.
- Tucker, A. (2009). *Queer visibilities: Space, identity and interaction in Cape Town*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- UN Women. (2020). *COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls* [Issue brief]. Retrieved November 1, 2021, from <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>

- Valocchi, S. (2005). Not yet queer enough: The lessons of queer theory for the sociology of gender and sexuality. *Gender & society*, 19(6), 750-770.
- van Klinken, A. (2020). Changing the narrative of sexuality in African Christianity: Bishop Christopher Senyonjo's LGBT advocacy. *Theology & Sexuality*, 26(1), 1–6.
- van Klinken, A., & Chitando, E. (2016). Introduction: Public religion, homophobia and the politics of homosexuality in Africa. In A. van Klinken & E. Chitando (Eds.), *Public religion and the politics of homosexuality in Africa* (pp. 1-16). Routledge.
- Vincent, L. (2008). Women's rights get a dressing down: Mini skirt attacks in South Africa. *International Journal of the Humanities*, 6(6), 11-18.
- Visser, G. (2010). Leisurely Lesbians in a Small City in South Africa. *Urban Forum* 21, 171–185.
- Visser, G. (2023). Moving Beyond the Gay Metropolises: Lessons Learned from Stellenbosch. *Urban Forum* 34, 179–189
- Wa Tushabe, T. (2017). Sexual rights in Uganda and the struggle for meaning in community. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 21(2), 169–185.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2016.1149004>
- Wahab, A. (2016). “Homosexuality/homophobia is un-African”? Un-mapping transnational discourses in the context of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill/Act. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 63(5), 685–718. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2015.1111105>
- Walker, A. (2014). ‘Our little secret’: How publicly heterosexual women make meaning from their ‘undercover’ same-sex sexual experiences. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 14(2), 194-208.
- Walker, C. (1990). The Women's Suffrage Movement: The politics of gender, race & class. In C. Walker (Ed.), *Women and gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (pp. 313-345). David Philip.

- Walker, C. (1991). *Women and resistance in South Africa*. New Africa Books.
- Wandrey, R. L., Mosack, K. E., & Moore, E. M. (2015). Coming out to family and friends as bisexually identified young adult women: A discussion of homophobia, biphobia, and heteronormativity. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 15(2), 204-229.
- Weiss, J. (2011). Reflective paper: GL versus BT: The archaeology of biphobia and transphobia within the US gay and lesbian community. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(4), 498–502.
- Wells, H., & Polders, L. (2006). Anti-gay hate crimes in South Africa: Prevalence, reporting practices, and experiences of the police. *Agenda*, 20(67), 20-28.
- Wittig, M. (1980). The straight mind. *Feminist Issues*, 1(1), 103–111.
- Wittig, M. (1993). One is not born a woman. In D. M. Halperin, M. A. Barale & H. Ablove (Eds.), *The lesbian and gay studies reader* (pp. 103–109). Routledge.
- Yoshino, K. (2000). The epistemic contract of bisexual erasure. *Stanford Law Review*, 52(2), 353–461.